

# THE SMART SET

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# THE COMING OF THE KING

By Frances Aymar Mathews

THE rue de la Rose Blanche is very narrow, very gloomy. The sun shines into it for only a half-hour once a day, at high noon. Its pavement is broken and rough, the despair of the very infrequent cab horses and of the few small children—all Americans and Spaniards, for the French child seems somehow to be eliminated from the Paris streets—who play mournfully with their dolls and their roller-skates under the windows of the Hôtel Petit St. Eustache and beneath the shrill supervision of Madame Caroline, the wife of the proprietor, who calls them momentarily to order from the office back of the porte-cochère.

The sun, yellow and warm, sifted down between the tall lines of houses and walked gloriously in at the two rather grimy windows of a room on the fourth floor, slanted across the dingy rug, and fell full upon the beautiful bronze-brown hair of a young girl of perhaps twenty, who stood in a very picturesque attitude leaning against the tiny mantel-shelf, one elbow there, the other 'kimboed at the turn of her waist. She had on a crimson gown, long-trained, somewhat frayed and a bit spotted, but gay with silver fringes and spangles, girdled with a paste-set zone; crimson silk stockings and no shoes; and in her lifted hand she held a forlorn and withered Jacqueminot rose. She regarded herself in the mirror over the mantelpiece with a mixture of scorn and complacency.

All sorts of motley-hued garments were strewn about the room; photographs of most of the stage celebrities of the hour were stuck in every possible place; the table was littered with

little play-books, foils, writing materials and the apparatus of the toilet.

The young girl from time to time repeated one sentence over and over and over again, with varying but apparently unsatisfactory degrees of emotion, since she still went on monotonously after a solid half-hour of its repetition.

"When a man loves me he tells me everything."

This is what this young girl, whose name was Pauline de la Coutrée-Ackerman, constantly said.

It is a sentence from Sardou's play of "Fedora," which Miss Ackerman was studying, among others, under the direction of Madame Reeb—the great and celebrated Reeb, who has launched a dozen voyagers of note upon the difficult sea of dramatic enterprise; whose classes are the hardest to obtain admission to in the whole of Paris; whose name is as one to conjure with; whose salons of every Sunday are among the most beguiling entertainments, also the most characteristically cosmopolitan—shall it be termed?—of all those for which Paris is so justly celebrated; who is an autocrat of the first class, as might be expected, since the rotary of talent had now established Madame Reeb in a position quite contrary to that which might have been augured from her earlier career as a *chanteuse diabolique*.

"Well, well," as one of the frequenters of her salons had remarked, "it perhaps requires one who has run the whole gamut herself to know exactly how to show the youth of a later generation at which note to stop short."

The Duc de Monplaisir had said

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this; his mama, whose papa was a magnificent brigand living in a cave on the side of Etna, had been a *chanteuse excentrique* and a compeer of the great Reeb; she had early in life married a baker at Sorrento and later had been created Duchesse de Monplaisir by his majesty, Napoleon the Third. The present duke was therefore the first of his line, now about thirty years of age, remarkably handsome, witty, accomplished and courageous, a *viveur* of the first order and said to be the best judge of wines in France. A photograph of his grace occupied a place of honor on Miss Ackerman's toilet-table, in a silver frame, with at present a bunch of violets in a broken-stemmed wineglass standing up against it.

This young girl was an American. She had a mother who had brought her to Paris and seen her comfortably and correctly settled at the Hôtel Petit St. Eustache, where half a dozen others of her compatriots were also domiciled, and, also, most of them pursuing that hydra-headed, manifold will-o'-the-wisp they call art; some as painters, when they should have been bread-makers; some as singers, whose obvious path lay toward nursery-governessing; others as actresses, who seemed to the ordinary eye palpably informed by nature for strictly home consumption.

Pauline Ackerman, however, had talent of a certain and very positive kind; she possessed atmosphere, distinction, poise, aplomb and a singularly pertinent and just sense of her own artistic and theatric values.

Yet just because she had the talent, or perhaps because this seems to be the universal law with young women studying for the stage, she was quite eager and ready, had it been possible, to throw the sock and buskin to the winds and leave the stage to supply itself otherwise, all for the sake of Louis, Duc de Monplaisir, to whom she had betrothed herself, now some three months since.

The hour which Reeb said must be spent in "Fedora's" cause having expired, Pauline crossed the little room and took up her lover's portrait; she

looked at it long and earnestly, and her lovely face flushed with that most splendid enthusiasm of youth, the godly thought that at this man's side she could rise to those heights of goodness, worth, benevolence and power which—the same God ever assisting us—all His creatures are capable of, though few manifest the fact.

She pressed her lips, half shyly, upon the picture, then sighed; and could she have known it the better part of her at that moment slipped away into the past, which is, many suppose, as eternal as the future, and more hopeless, since it is unrecoverable.

The thump of wheels, the shrieks, both of American children and Madame Caroline in their behalf, the curses of the cabmen, the laughter of some passers-by, all fell unheeded on Pauline's ear, as she stood there, with the last glint of the sun glorifying and ennobling her face. She did not even hear the bump of the trunks that were taken from the top of the cab, nor Madame Caroline's squabble with the cabman over his *pourboire*, nor the heavy tread of Angelo, the porter, coming up the long flights, nor the lighter footsteps which preceded him.

There was a tap at the door and almost simultaneously it was opened. Pauline looked up.

A well-dressed, pretty, rather jaunty-looking woman of probably forty-four stood smiling in the entrance.

"Mother!"

"Pauline!" And they were in each other's arms.

"I am so glad you have come," the girl said when they were alone, a bit of luncheon eaten and the disagreeableness of a journey from Scotland described.

"Why, I had to come," replied the older woman, quite vividly transatlantic with the inevitable "why," notwithstanding her five years of European knocking about. "After such a letter as your last I simply told the Eastcourts I must go to you at once; I regretted your attitude, my dear, more than I can express, for I am positive, had I been able to stop a

week longer, I should have had the opportunity of accepting or refusing the Honorable Percy Eastcourt, of East Lodge, Surrey, and Park Lane, London!"

"Oh, mother!"—Pauline smiled and shook her head—"not another slip of the cup surely? Don't you know you're always, dearest, just going to refuse someone? Really, now, the situation here with me demands your presence."

"Well," returned Mrs. Ackerman good-humoredly, "what is the trouble, anyway? Your letters were so vague and so inscrutable I could make out nothing except that I must come. Is it money?"

"No," Pauline answered quickly, "it's not money. That has been an ever-present worry and fret, but it is not on that account that I wanted you. Mother—" The girl slipped to the floor from her perch on the little bed. She placed her head upon her mother's knee and sighed.

Mrs. Ackerman bent and kissed the beautiful, soft, thick hair, and the two women's hands met and clasped closely.

"Then, I suppose, it is about the duke—about Louis?" the older woman asked gently.

The girl nodded slowly.

"Tell me all about it, my dear," Mrs. Ackerman said, with a sigh. "I trust it is not broken off?" she eagerly added.

Pauline shook her head.

"Ah!" exclaimed the mother, in a relieved tone, "then it is not so bad, after all!" She withdrew her hand from her daughter's and sat up straight in her perfectly fitting brown gown. Mrs. Ackerman was the possessor of a fine figure, read the papers, frequented the beautifiers and knew that at her age one cannot afford to indulge either in lax poses or too much emotion.

Pauline laughed as she took back her hand, clasped it and its mate around her up-drawn knees and poked out one small foot to the meagre warmth of the little fire in the grate.

"My dear child, where are your shoes?"

"Yonder on the window-seat. Reeb makes me study two hours a day in my stockings, dear, so as to obtain the *pose plastique* from the feet up—see? Dear old mammy, don't look so horrified! Art has devious paths; some of them must be taken unshod!"

Mrs. Ackerman drew in her lips very firmly until, catching a glimpse of herself in the mirror opposite, she remembered the adjurations of the beautifiers.

"It strikes me, Pauline, that since you are really engaged to a man of title and position, a man who must have some means in order to live as you wrote me that the duke does live—the flowers, the bonbons, the carriages for you and your friends, the boxes at the opera, the races, the dinners—it is about time for you to discard this stage idea and set about purchasing—your trousseau, eh?" Mrs. Ackerman laughed pleasantly.

"There you are—not, mother!" Pauline said. "I am engaged; Louis is all impatience—or he was—to see you and make his formal proposition for my hand; but about three weeks ago there seemed to come a change." The girl's head lowered so that her round chin lay buried in the little ruffles and ruches of her gown.

"Oh, mother, I don't know, I don't know! It is there, I can feel it, yet he is just as tender and devoted as ever—only—there is a difference, a little, little shadow."

"Well," returned the other woman briskly, "I wouldn't feel so very badly, my dear. Just tell me who you think the other woman is, and I will see what can be done."

"The other woman!" Pauline sprang to her feet in a fashion that for suppleness and intensity of expression would have joyed the soul of Reeb. "Oh!" she cried, a little under her breath, "there is none! If there were it would be easier, for one could not want the man to whom 'the other woman' were possible; one would feel that one had made a mistake and—look forward."

She raised her eyes now to meet those of the photograph on the toilet-table,

and it was obvious that her heart lay there—now, at any rate.

"It's worse than that, dearest, I think." Pauline laughed, too, in a manner that would please the great Reeb; she sat on the heavy centre-table, swinging her feet back and forth and pushing her long hair from her flushed cheeks.

Mrs. Ackerman regarded her daughter with an air of puzzled speculation; this phase of Pauline was new to her.

"You see, you started me here—I mean at Reeb's, and among all the queer and not queer people of this part of Paris, as an heiress. Before you left me to the chaperonage of Madame Caroline everybody was thoroughly apprised of the fact that I was the great-grandniece and heiress—*soi-disant*!—of the wealthy and eccentric Marquise de Brimont and of her sister, Mademoiselle de la Coutrée."

"So you are their great-grandniece!" interrupted Mrs. Ackerman, with asperity. "Their elder brother, Albert Léonce Lionel de la Coutrée, emigrated to Louisiana in seventeen something or other, married, had a daughter, who married an Ackerman and was the mother of your father. I'm sure that's straight as a die, and I can prove it, too."

"Yes, dear, I know; but, after all, I suspect the lineage isn't half the consequence of the inheritance. Now, I am not the heiress of those two respectable old ladies at all unless they were to will it so, which they are hardly likely to do, since we have never seen one another and they are wholly unaware of my existence!"

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Ackerman, in evident irritation. "Of course, in the strict sense, you're not their heiress; for all I know they may have a dozen children apiece. I merely supposed it would be a good card for you to speak of the relationship, and I certainly didn't mean any harm by casually mentioning something about your being their heiress. I can tell you one thing"—Mrs. Ackerman now rose and began to unlock and unstrap her trunks—"you would never have

received the attention you have from Reeb; you would never have been given the entrée to her salon; you would never have"—the mother's voice rose with the length of her remarks, manifesting conclusively that the noble blood which may have flowed in her child's veins came through the paternal line—"captured a duke, miss, if I had not said just what I did say! American girls without portions are quite at a discount, even in the continental title market!"

"I think," Pauline finally replied, after a pause which she had spent in just one little poor prayer heavenward, the words of which were, "God help me, for there is no one else," "I think you are correct." Her tone was cool and formal. "I think the absence of a *dot* is the cause of the duke's change of manner."

"Why did you tell him the truth?" asked the older woman angrily, shaking out her folded gowns.

"I told him nothing about it."

"Stuff and nonsense! Then you have allowed some silly idea to come into your head—some romantic rubbish. If the man loves you—" Mrs. Ackerman stopped short in spreading a silk bodice over a chair-back, and looked sharply at her daughter. "Doesn't he love you?"

"I believe that he does." There was a curious reverence in Pauline's voice, the reverence of one who is forced reluctantly to unveil her sanctuary.

"Why! then it's all right! Get married as fast as possible! Once madame la duchesse, all will be rosy enough. Even if you have to go upon the stage, a title is a sure winner, and as you have ability, why, what more do you want?"

"Less, perhaps!" Pauline Ackerman said, quite to herself.

"See here," continued her mother, "you just leave the duke to me. I'll befuddle him with some pretty stories of the dear old marquise, and at the same time frighten him into the belief that I will not permit you to marry him—republican prejudices against

titles; rather see you the 'wife of a good, plain American,' and all that sort of thing; then, if he cares a sou about you—why, you'll elope before you know it! He has no father nor mother, and so French law has no hand in the matter."

Pauline sat down, quite still.

"Aha!" pursued Mrs. Ackerman blithely, "these men, I know how to manage them! I wasn't the wife and helpmeet of a land-improvement promoter for nothing! Why, my dear child, your father's business wouldn't have amounted to a row of pins in a year if I hadn't turned in and put my shoulder to the wheel. He always wanted to refuse to push any scheme that wasn't *bona fide*. I had to urge, and beg, and argue—it meant bread and butter—as well as jam and cake—and then when I'd won him over, forsooth, I was the one to meet the capitalists every time; dine them, wine them, rope them in. Leave his grace to your mother, my dear, and—don't, for heaven's sake, sit there and look like a picture of despair!"

Pauline, however, did sit still, just a little longer, and it is quite possible that the rival elements and foundations of her being were warring within her; quite possible that the two spirits, the one of the "promoter" and the other of the promoter's wife, wrestled together within their child's soul for the mastery.

"May I inquire," the mother remarked suavely, "what you have that done-out evening gown on for at this time of the day, and also where the room is that you have engaged for me?"

"Reeb makes me do all my studying in an evening gown, when the role is one demanding it. Your room, mother, is the same old one"—she rose and opened the door leading into another apartment—"you had last year. See, you can sleep in here, and it will serve as a little sitting- or reception-room."

"Just so; where I can receive the duke, eh? By the way, is he due, or what have you on for this evening?"

"Oh, tonight? Sunday! it is Reeb's night; have you forgotten the famous Sundays in the rue de Helder? Mother, Louis will be there; he always is, and you will meet, and you must like him."

"Probably," returned Mrs. Ackerman, with an equivocal smile. "It is, however, more probable that he won't be quite as sure of your mama after he has seen her as before! You had better lie down now and get into form; you look fagged. I do, too!"

But at half-after six neither of the two women looked as if they could ever have presented a "fagged" appearance.

Mrs. Ackerman was charmingly easy, both as to face and ensemble; smooth, pink and white, admirably coiffed, well gowned and groomed; black satin, jet, a bit of old lace, a diamond pin, a white aigrette, svelte, almost unctuous. Her daughter was radiant, one of those young creatures whose rose blood flies its jubilant flag in their cheeks whenever candlelight and the hour for what continental nations call "distraction" arrives; tall, lithe, swathed in some black-spangled gauze stuff, setting off the creamy shoulders and long arms; a rope of big mock pearls twisted around her throat and her bronze hair in a bewildering and presumably artistic tangle all about her face and ears; her bodice slipped a trifle at the waist line away from the trailing skirt, but a pin caught the two together again after a fashion. A hook was missing in the bodice, but another pin did obvious duty there, and the general effect was striking—as a riotous adolescence, not yet quite whipped into the definite non-descriptness of perfect breeding or perfect *savoir faire*.

It was curious, but true, that those missing hooks, those slipping waistbands, those ever-present pins in Pauline Ackerman's make-up, had the effect upon some persons of creating a distinct distrust; conveying to those supersensitive individuals the impression of a moral or mental laxity—which the young woman's conduct thus far had in no wise carried out.

Be that as it may, when the mother and daughter entered the dining-room of the Hôtel Petit St. Eustache their appearance produced a veritable sensation among the strange mixed company always to be met at the table d'hôte of such houses.

Madame Caroline herself felt a degree of positive shame at the table outfit, and to the eyes of Angelo, who did double duty with trunks and platters, the two little glass dishes at either end of the board, each containing seven gum-drops of assorted colors, the ten lady's-fingers, split into halves to make twenty morsels and piled in the epergne criss-cross, with five figs and three limes as a foundation, appeared absolutely ridiculous to set before such grand and gracious ladies. The old watchmaker regarded the supposed heiress as a vision of fairyland; the young scene-painter of the opera vainly essayed to fix her features in his memory tonight and on his canvas remnants tomorrow; the old lady who made lace spoke to the saints in her prayers of the *belle Américaine*, and besought that they might bring her safely into the mother church; while the two young ladies, one of whom danced in the third row of the ballet, her sister making up the faces, one after another, in a row of the coryphées at the Porte St. Martin every night, beheld in this blooming, happy and thought-to-be-rich demoiselle the acme of all things desirable and a future artiste as great, maybe, as the great Reeb herself.

For them, one and all, Pauline had a bright smile, a kindly word; to her the intentional and perfected haughtiness of her mother was impossible. Swayed by the flow of a sympathetic or admiring current, she loved approbation too well ever to forfeit its possibility; yet she had her reticences, which were more profound, more full of meaning than the exclusiveness of her mother.

They dined; the cab came, and at the same moment a bunch of magnificent Jack roses from the duke. They drove to the house in the rue de Helder, and presently were entering the salon of Reeb.

The salon in itself was a curio, with which "*tout Paris*"—a descriptive phrase, it will be recalled, which is interchangeably used by very different circles of people, to indicate his or her own special world—"tout Paris," then, of artists, musicians, composers, writers, journalists, poets, novelists, actors, actresses, men-about-town, men of position in diplomacy, society, lineage and so forth, were quite familiar. The walls and floors were covered with tiger skins entirely; so was the one sofa; the ceiling represented the starlighted sky. The light was solely from candles in tall crystal branches. On the sofa sat Reeb. No one else could sit in the room, for there was not another seat, save the piano-stool, and it was permanently held by the accompanists.

Reeb, long since having forgotten the days when she was a *chanteuse diabolique*—they were not many, for her marvelous art had soon demonstrated itself and shown her to the world as the greatest Frou-frou, the greatest Marguerite Gautier, the greatest Theodora ever imagined—Reeb at this moment stood, fair, slender as ever, sinuous as the sleekest adder, her wonderful Hebrew eyes still dominant with youth and magnetism; her mat of yellow hair still shadowing them in golden coquetry; her neck bare and white, without a string or jewel to mar its breadth or length; her smile full of the witchery that the oldest man in the room could associate with his youth.

It was superb, miraculous, until Pauline Ackerman came in and went up to her and for a moment stood beside her preceptress. Then Reeb became the most impudent counterfeit under the sun.

Witty, wise that she was, she sent the pupil across the room, saying to the mother whom she invited to the sofa:

"Mademoiselle is still herself; I"—with an infinitesimal lift of the shoulders—"I, madame, am but the portrait of Reeb in her youth. Pigments turn green, madame, with envy"—she laughed musically—"when put side by side with real flesh and blood!"

Reeb, then, was an institution; one

of the people that make Paris what it is; her salon suited Mrs. Ackerman well, but not so well as it suited Mrs. Ackerman's daughter. The older woman was keenly ambitious, and felt Reeb's social limitations, nowhere so marked as in her own city. The younger enjoyed the sensations of an explorer in a new country; she aspired to nothing as yet any higher, nor did she quite appreciate the exact standing of her present position. Pauline loved, had met the man in this house, and so this love glorified and haloed even Reeb!

The Duc de Monplaisir awaited her when she arrived. Presently she presented him to her mother; and it is quite the fact that he experienced a slight surprise when Mrs. Ackerman surveyed him with aplomb, did not extend that haughty American hand to him, to which all his previous encounters with *ces dames américaines* had accustomed him, and seemed to regard him with an eye wholly divorced from a sense of what he considered the current value of his title.

In short, the evening ended with but a courteous acquiescence on the part of Mrs. Ackerman, when the duke asked permission to call next day and pay his respects to her; and this was vouchsafed only when he was assisting the two ladies into their cab.

But the duke was of that disposition which quickly rallies; he mentally solved the problem of Mrs. Ackerman's coolness in short order, and realized the situation correctly by setting down madame la mère as a very clever, worldly-wise woman, who had heard of his slight change of demeanor and did not intend to tolerate it.

The duke loved Pauline very dearly; "to distraction, to death, to the last drop of his blood," he would have sworn to you; but he was not a fool, nor yet a Baron Hirsch.

He re-entered Reeb's salon, and sat there playing écarté, and losing heavily until four o'clock Monday morning. He was extremely sorry that he had not won those five thousand francs for two reasons: one was that had he, he would have felt more sure of his

ability to take care of a wife on a paste-board basis; the other, of little importance, was, that although he had no intention of paying Reeb, she would never cease to annoy him with reminders of the debt.

He walked home in the early spring freshness, feeling the wind blow up in his face from the Seine. When he reached his room at the top of a tall hôtel back of the Madeleine, he poured out some absinthe, tilting the glass toward Pauline's photograph on the wall as he drained it.

"Well, today at three o'clock madame la mère must be met," he said, "and if there is no way of obtaining money—" His grace struck a match, lighted a cigar and cursed the lost battle of Sedan with considerable violence.

## II

At the hour appointed, however, he was at the Hôtel Petit St. Eustache, immaculate as to manner and dress. Madame Caroline, glowing with honest pride, called loudly to Angelo to announce to Madame Ackerman that "Monsieur the Duc de Monplaisir was in the salon and would she be pleased to descend, or should monsieur the duke come up?"

Monsieur the duke would kindly condescend to mount; which he did, and was received by madame with a slightly less glacial air than that of the night before. Mademoiselle was invisible, but perfectly within hearing, as the duke instantly divined with his ready and keenly observant habit of mind.

After a few not glittering but distinctly dull generalities, the man plunged into his subject and object, as a brave man should. In fact, the duke had no hesitations; it is hardly to be expected that the grandson of a brigand and the son of a *chanteuse excentrique* would be burdened that way. He said:

"Madame, I love, I adore, I worship mademoiselle, your daughter."

Mrs. Ackerman inclined her head as though listening to an oft-told tale.

"I desire, madame, to ask your consent to the marriage of your daughter and myself."

Mrs. Ackerman really smiled and her muscles relaxed; she quite forgot the beautifier's advice for the nonce.

"I cannot, madame, live without"—here the duke rose and crossed the little room, crossed back again and brought up standing before Mrs. Ackerman, with his hand upon his heart, and bowing very low—"your daughter. Madame, will you deign to look with favor upon my suit? Will you set the seal of your complaisant approbation upon the exchange of these vows which mademoiselle has doubtless already apprised you of?"

Mrs. Ackerman's perfectly collected pause at this juncture caused her visitor a very uncomfortable one hundred and twenty seconds; for, as has been said, he loved Pauline with all the love of which he was capable, and with the customary logic of love he hoped for all those adjuncts which he at present could not see any prospect of obtaining.

"Monsieur," at last said Mrs. Ackerman, "I appreciate to the fullest extent the honor you would confer upon my daughter, but before I can consent to part with her I must inform myself whether the man who seeks her is one to whom not only she herself may be safely intrusted, but"—Mrs. Ackerman's level brows lifted slightly, her smile became deprecatory, the wave of her jeweled hand was airy—"I must also be assured that he is not seeking my child from mercenary motives; that he is a person who will be capable"—Mrs. Ackerman stopped in a leisurely way now to clear her throat—"capable," repeated she, "of administering the five millions of francs to which, as you doubtless are aware, my daughter is heiress."

Pauline, on the other side of the closed door, sitting in a fever of impatience, jumped to her feet, and fairly gasped at this splendid assertion.

Louis Eugène Napoleon, Duc de Monplaisir, did not move. Finally he again crossed over to the window,

folded his arms on his chest and came back to Mrs. Ackerman, noting by the way her triumphant pose on the stiff haircloth sofa.

"Madame," said the duke, laying his hand upon the back of the small rush-bottomed chair which he placed near his hostess, "it is a fortune of fifty millions of francs—and mademoiselle is the sole heiress?" with a slight but noticeable emphasis upon the words "fifty" and "sole."

Mrs. Ackerman looked at the duke with a puzzled but by no means unguarded expression.

Her daughter, on the other side of the thin partition, panted with suppressed excitement.

Mrs. Ackerman now inclined her head in unconcerned assent, as one might who had made an unimportant error, and said, in a continuing tone:

"The estate is situated in Normandy."

"In Languedoc, madame, pardon me," murmured the duke, now resting both hands on the chair-back, with an expostulating shrug.

"Yes, yes, you are correct," assented the mother, now fairly bewildered, but still maintaining a calm exterior; "in Languedoc."

"Yes, madame, the Château de Brimont, also the town of Brimont-Aujillac, with its rich silk factories; the villages and farms, vineyards, wine-presses and olive groves of Brimont-Taube; the fisheries of Taube-sur-Mer; also the immense collection of jewels, paintings, works of art; the rents, the bonds, the stocks, the investments, both of Madame la Marquise de Brimont and of her spinster sister, Mademoiselle de la Coutrée, are solely the legal heritage of my beloved Pauline."

It is occasion which brings elemental capacities to the fore; and occasion cannot be created, it must come. De Monplaisir thought that his occasion had arrived.

As he now placed his chair several inches nearer to his hostess and leaned in her direction with a somewhat confidential air, Mrs. Ackerman felt that in some mysterious way whip, reins and

spur had slipped from her superintendence into the keeping of the young man whose handsome eyes were bent upon her face.

With the ready tact which had so often served her, she now drew herself up haughtily and regarded her *vis-à-vis* with scorn.

"It seems, then, that monsieur has been at great pains to acquaint himself with all the minutiae of my daughter's prospects; it is possibly not too much to infer that monsieur is even more interested in the estates to which my daughter is heiress than—in my daughter herself."

Mrs. Ackerman, having been vouchsafed information which she hitherto had not even suspected, and from a source not to be impugned, immediately, like the experienced person she was, set about using her freshly acquired weapons.

Pauline, meantime, stood with her young lips set hard together, wondering; and as yet the wonder was all toward Love's conquest, with scarcely a thought for the balance on the other side.

"Madame," exclaimed Louis de Monplaisir, as though cut to the quick, and drawing back from his companion, "it is unkind, ungenerous so to accuse me. Listen, madame, I implore of you!" He sprang to his feet and placed the chair away against the wall. "And then," he continued excitedly, "after I have been permitted to explain myself—condemn me if you will!"

Mrs. Ackerman inclined her head graciously; indeed, she had not the slightest idea of letting the young nobleman out of her sight until she had obtained all the details of her child's prospective possessions; and as she made the motion of condescending acquiescence visions of such splendors as she had never before dreamed of flitted through her active brain.

The duke, for the second time, brought forward the little chair and seated himself in such a position that, had it not been for the partition, he would have faced his adored Pauline.

"Madame," he exclaimed, in a voice modulated exquisitely, yet not lacking the timbre of absolute matter-of-factness, "it is most true that I have had the interests of mademoiselle, your daughter, more at heart, it seems, than anyone else in the world, not excepting madame, your most amiable self. Yes, madame," continued the duke, with emphasis, "this is a fact. To you, madame, the details of mademoiselle's inheritance, the names of her legacies, the amount of her fortune were unknown until a few moments since. Is it not so?"

Mrs. Ackerman, still clinging to her customs, coolly replied:

"My dear duke, with those little matters I have not occupied myself."

"But I—I have! Yes, madame, a Frenchman, when he loves, when he wishes to marry, looks into the future and sees there, when there is no income, much unhappiness; he beholds his wife, his children, himself without those necessities and luxuries to which he has ever been used. He calculates how to obtain them, and when this seems impossible he withdraws, madame, in honor, and endeavors to console himself. With you, madame, in America, it is quite another thing, I know. It is marriage first, reflection afterward; then misery; then divorce. Believe me, madame, it is this foolish habit among your fellow-countrymen of rushing into matrimony without money which has made your courts so overflowing with these *causes célèbres*."

The duke, in his excitement, had risen and crossed the room. He drew his handkerchief across his brow and whisked it into his breast pocket.

"Now, madame, I am the most frank man you could imagine. Four weeks ago I say to myself, 'Louis, my dear fellow, how are you to marry the young girl you adore? You have no fortune save a few thousand francs a year, enough to supply your barest wants; you have no profession save that of arms'—as you know, madame, I hold a captain's commission in the Regiment of the Royal Guards of St. Petersburg —'you are not too lucky with the cards;

your tastes are expensive. Pauline has no private fortune whatever."

"Pauline has her art," interrupted Mrs. Ackerman, still adhering to her proclivities. "Reeb says she will one day electrify the world and see it at her feet."

"Yes, madame," returned his grace deferentially, yet with a sigh, "but who can tell if mademoiselle will be the success—or the failure? To return, if you will permit me? At the crisis I say to myself, 'Hold! I recollect that when Reeb presented me to mademoiselle she said that mademoiselle was an heiress. To what? That must be discovered.' I soon found that my adored Pauline knew nothing whatever of this fortune. I said to myself, 'This young girl has no father; her mother is absent; it remains for you to act the part of father and suitor at once.' I did so. I took into my service one of the cleverest detectives in Paris; I sent him to Languedoc, to Brimont-Aujillac, Brimont-Taube, Taube-sur-Mer."

Pauline's hand at this juncture grasped the edge of the heavy table for support; as the word "detective" passed the lips of her lover her fine lips curled, but at the same time she did not forget the news he had imparted; she did not forget that she stood there in the shadow of that horrid, shabby little old hotel, heiress to fifty millions of francs.

"He looks up old deeds, registers of births, marriages, deaths, wills," resumed the duke. "He returns to Paris and reassures himself with research here also; he goes across to England and brings back copies of the records of your husband's noble family there. The result is, madame, the indisputable fact that mademoiselle, your daughter, is the sole heiress to the Brimont estates, to the fortune of de la Coutrée; she is the sole surviving scion of the noble family of de la Coutrée; the family of Brimont is extinct in all branches, either direct, collateral or left-handed. The marquise is in her seventy-second year. She is the last to bear the name."

Pauline's eyes flashed; she removed her hand from the table. She felt strong enough now to stand quite alone and look down with a smile upon the whole round world. She would be "madame la duchesse" and would have millions to support the position; she would return to New York, and those girls who ignored her in her flimsy frocks at school, who were married to mere tradesmen, should behold how splendid and how gracious this young duchess could be.

The duke now paused—from a certain inexplicable embarrassment, it seemed, for he looked down and nervously stroked his small dark mustache and imperial.

Mrs. Ackerman, determined not to be in any way overcome by these surprising and, as she very well knew, trustworthy announcements, gave a careless flick to her cashmere skirt and leaning back in the uncomfortable haircloth, said:

"Well, my dear duke, and how am I to be assured, especially considering the pains you have been at"—with an equivocal smile—"that you will prove adequate to the task and responsibility of attending to Pauline's interests, when, of course, she comes into her inheritance?" Here Mrs. Ackerman could not refrain from a lofty sway of her head.

"Alas, madame"—Louis de Monplaisir now leaned his back against the broad window-seat and surveyed the mother of Pauline with brooding and yet calculating eyes—"alas, madame, although all that I have told you is true, and I am in possession of the documents to prove it, still, madame, it is necessary for me to tell you that——"

As he paused Mrs. Ackerman sat up straight, and her daughter started toward the door between the rooms.

"Go on!" ejaculated the mother tensely.

"—that Mademoiselle Pauline will never inherit a sou of this great fortune."

The door opened and the young girl stood there on the sill.

"Why not?" she asked, in a curious low tone—so curious and unwonted that neither of the others thought of such things as conventionalities, and the man answered at once:

"Because, mademoiselle, both these ladies, the marquise and her sister, have made their wills in favor of another."

The duke now stepped toward his fiancée and attempted to raise her hand to his lips, but in a manner that betrayed no compunctions of romance she waved him away.

"Would it not be possible to break these wills?" she asked.

"No, mademoiselle, utterly impossible," replied his grace. "It is because it is so impossible, because, madame and mademoiselle, I see no future before us, no prospect of marriage, that I have, I am aware, presented to you, my beloved Pauline, so distraught a manner for these past three weeks."

"Ah, yes, I suppose so," returned the girl absently.

No one spoke now for a few moments. The duke, of course, had his plans; the mother was nonplussed, and that hour had arrived for her which generally arrives somewhat earlier in the lives of American mothers—the hour when, as a direct result of their own educational methods, they find themselves looking instinctively to their daughters for the solution and conduct of the crises which they themselves should be the ones to direct.

When the eyes of Mrs. Ackerman finally sought Pauline's in helpless inquiry the answer was ready.

"Who is the person to whom my great-grandaunts have willed away—my inheritance?" she asked, clasping her hands behind her, but not moving from the doorway.

"A man," replied the duke, regarding her with an access of admiration, for her pose was that beautiful one of transition—the expectant, exquisite, almost indefinite instant of life when the girl becomes the woman.

"What is his name?"

"He is called indifferently the Duc d'Orléans, Philippe the Eighth and

Louis the Nineteenth," was the response, tinged with such a contemptuous deflection as might be expected from this man when mentioning the one in question. "In Brimont, and throughout the entire estate of the marquise, the people are loyal to the house of Bourbon, and they look for the coming of one whom they call their king, any day," continued the duke, since both of his companions remained silent.

"How extraordinary!" finally vouchsafed Mrs. Ackerman, in a dazed fashion, still looking at her daughter.

"Yes, madame, that is a fact," responded his grace. "Those two venerable ladies, incredible as it may appear, although they have never beheld this young man, or even his portrait—for, madame, to you it will be inconceivable, but Brimont is as far removed from modern methods as the Arctic region—these ladies watch each day for the arrival of their worshiped sovereign, whom they have unitedly made their heir."

The glances of the duke and his fiancée now met in one of those spiritual exchanges of thought for which we have not yet coined any adequate phrase.

For only a minute Pauline hesitated, and in that minute she put away from her the sublime and beautiful hope of every woman's heart—the hope for a great, absorbing and unselfish love. She said within herself that since Providence had not given her this priceless gift, then Providence must take the consequences.

She spoke first.

"Why not have him arrive?" Her smile was fine and bitter and did not beautify her features.

Her mother stared at her in unfeigned astonishment. Her lover sprang to her side and seized both her hands.

"Aha!" he cried joyfully, yet a trifle under his breath, as if not quite sure of his assumption.

"You comprehend, Pauline? You comprehend?"

She slowly nodded her head, leaving

her chilly little hands in the grasp of the duke's firm warm ones.

"I have seen pictures of the Bourbon princes," she said slowly, at the same time critically surveying the man before her. "You are not extremely unlike them—quite enough for the purpose of enacting his role for the benefit of the marquise, my great-grand-aunt."

Then Pauline laughed, and de Monplaisir covered her hands with kisses, and tears of joy suffused his eyes for a second or two.

He knew that Pauline had grasped his scheme with the most exquisite alacrity, and that she would adjust herself perfectly to its intricacies; so it is that many besides the immortals recognize each other instinctively.

Mrs. Ackerman, twenty years her daughter's senior, felt bound, at her daughter's assertion and constrained by the gravities of this situation—it being far in advance of even the most impalpable of her late husband's land schemes—to rise, lift her hands in the air, shake her head and cry out:

"Pauline, you are surely beside yourself! I cannot countenance anything so preposterous! I——"

"Pshaw, mother!" interrupted the girl, loosening her hands from the duke's, advancing into the room and sitting down at the table where paper, ink and pens were lying.

The two words were certainly nothing in themselves; but the intonation completely dismissed Pauline Ackerman's past, and her mother thoroughly understood that henceforth the young girl would take the lead—which she at once proceeded to do. Turning to de Monplaisir she leaned her elbows on the table, her chin in her palms, and asked:

"Well, monsieur, what do you propose? What is your plan?"

"I am in your hands," replied the duke, who was quite clever enough to know a good thing when he saw it. He had all the true Frenchman's respect for and confidence in a bright woman, preferring what he termed the "supreme instinct of femininity" to

the more robust and less feasible masculine program.

"We must work together," she said, shrugging her shoulders.

"Oh, assuredly! But, Pauline, you are more imaginative, also more executive than I. Where I should blunder you would conciliate; to you I look, my well beloved, for the initiative in our struggle to obtain your rights."

At this point the mother, who had not quite accepted the third person as an integral part of her soul, and who still felt clinging to her the fact that the duke was an outsider, said quickly:

"We must first be sure, my dear child, that this great fortune is your right. We must first find out if the marquise has not a perfect right on her side to bequeath her property to whom-ever she pleases. We must do nothing in haste."

"But we must!" said the girl.

"Ah, madame, but we must!" repeated the duke.

"Mother," Pauline added, taking up a pen and uncovering the ink, "this fortune is my right. I shall fight for it with all the weapons at my command. I cannot go out and hack my way to my estates with a sword, but with my wits I can perhaps win in the end. It is not right nor reason that this ridiculous old woman should leave what should be mine to a man whom she has never seen—to a pretender, to one who plots, I don't doubt, to overthrow the Republic, and who would use my millions to reinstate himself as king over France!"

"Precisely, madame!" The duke took a virtuous turn up the room, and Mrs. Ackerman's last stand for remonstrance tumbled into the waste-basket with all its predecessors.

"Precisely," repeated his grace. "This upstart young scion of a fallen dynasty would immediately appropriate every franc of the fortune in his endeavor to re-establish the execrable house of Bourbon. Mademoiselle owes it to the people of France, as the future Duchesse de Monplaisir, to circumvent so impious a misuse." With which noble and suitable sentiment

Louis Eugène Napoleon, Duc de Monplaisir, brought up at the side of his fiancée.

Pauline started to rise, but as she felt her suitor's hand on the back of her chair she paused.

"I am writing," she said, "to my great-grandaunt, the marquise. That is the first step; it will cost only fifteen centimes." Pauline laughed. "I shall say that you and I, mother, purpose going down into Languedoc, expressly to have the honor of seeing her and the other old party. Once we get there things must, of course, in a measure shape themselves. It is possible that the old dame might take a fancy to me and shelve Louis the—what did you call him?"

"Louis the Nineteenth," replied the duke, quickly adding, "never, mademoiselle! Do not delude yourself. Loyalty of the most profound nature runs with the blood of de la Coutrée and that of de Brimont as well. Even you, my Pauline, will cause no diversion from the devotion which has kept these women in self-imposed exile for nearly fifty years."

"All right!" exclaimed Miss Ackerman, writing a few more lines on her sheet.

"See here," she said presently, turning toward her fiancé, "if I go there, and lay the way smoothly for the arrival of the king, are you entirely sure that you can play the part?"

The duke drew himself up with a suspicion of haughtiness and silently bowed to Miss Ackerman with the courtly grace of an emperor.

"Ah, I see," she remarked. "You can do it. And mother, even with her weak French, can soon bring the sisters into fine form. Trust her for making a success of the role of the ingenuous prospective mother-in-law of the heir to the throne!"

"Adorable young girl!" cried his grace, who today enjoyed uttering all those pleasurable sensations upon which he had meditated in secret, ever since the return of the gentleman whom he had sent to Brimont a month before.

Given an inheritance of consummate finesse, splendid manners, imperial tastes, liberal passions, no virtues worth mentioning and a lavish education in all the pleasures and philosophic experiments and excursions of which his mentality permitted, it could hardly result otherwise than that this young man should greet the present situation with the keenest relish.

"Now, at last," said Pauline, laying down her pen, "I will read you my letter.

"HÔTEL PETIT ST. EUSTACHE, RUE DE LA ROSE BLANCHE, NO. II, PARIS.

*"To Madame la Marquise de Brimont and to Mademoiselle de la Coutrée.*

"MESDAMES: To you I am a stranger, but through my late revered father, John de la Coutrée-Ackerman, of the United States of America, I am your great-grandniece, and so I am informed by my mother, the last of our honored line. My dear mother at last has consented to grant my request and take me to the beautiful Languedoc country and show me the place where my ancestors dwelt, where beat those noble hearts forever devoted to the cause of king and country!"

Both the duke and Mrs. Ackerman now clapped their hands in perfect paroxysms of delight.

"What a mind!" cried the suitor.

"Pauline, you'll do!" exclaimed the mother.

"You see," explained the girl, "it's best to disarm them from the start. Now, listen to the rest:

"Pray, venerated relations, do not allow our coming to disturb the routine of your pious lives—

"I suppose they are pious?" she interpolated jocularly.

"Oh, by all means—a chaplain resident, and mass sung every day in the year," answered the duke.

"—pious lives. My dear mother and I will stop at the inn, and as we shall take our wheels with us we can ride to the chateau and call upon you at any hour you will name. We shall leave Paris on about the sixteenth of the month. Dear and revered relations, I kiss your hands and beg to be forgiven my presumption in saying that I am waiting to see you with unparalleled impatience, and that I am ever your devoted and affectionate great-grandniece,

"PAULINE DE LA COUTRÉE-ACKERMAN.

"My mother presents her most respectful

and affectionate greetings and emulates my impatience to behold the relatives of her adored husband."

"It is perfection!" exclaimed the duke.

"Sounds just like a letter from a nice little innocent convent-bred girl, now, doesn't it?" laughed Pauline.

"It certainly does," confirmed the mother; adding thoughtfully, "isn't it just a little too brief, eh?"

Miss Ackerman shook her head.

"It says all I intend to say at present," she remarked, "and a lot more words might confuse them; besides, my French composition isn't any too good. No, that letter is all right."

It was. Pauline had not been adding five dollars a week to her meagre supply of pocket money, by writing "letters from Paris" to a New York paper, without having learned the very exact science of calculating the kernel to a T and always sending it minus the shell.

She now addressed her envelope under the duke's superintendence as to its elaborate details, stamped it, and presently watched his grace drop it into the box at the corner of the street.

### III

WHERE an arm of the great blue sea stretched up between the brown lands, where a foaming brook like an outstretched finger, fissuring down the rocky way from its birth in the Cévennes, meets and marries with the sea-arm, there lies Brimont-Taube, with the garden-beds of the grand chateau lapped by the lips of the laughing little river. Yonder, two leagues away, is Brimont-Aujillac, where the smoke from the five tall chimneys of the silk factory, belonging, as does all the rest hereabouts, to the Marquise de Brimont, clouds the sky, trailing westward in the wake of the wind. Hither where the sea sweeps up the sands and swallows the small Taube River at one famous gulp, lies nestling under a pile of rocks Taube-sur-Mer, a fishing village, with a group of huts,

beached boats, nets drying in the sun; clattering of wooden shoes, chattering of soft clicking tongues of Languedoc, high laughter, tuned to override the whistle and shriek of the storms, straight-backed, comely women balancing baskets of fish on their heads as they stride up the sand hills past the church with its glittering cross, past the tiny square with its granite column, a sturdy bronze Napoleon the First atop of it; past the rows of houses, up the rue de Taube, out to the King's Highway; climbing the hill that leads to the great gates of the park of the Château de Brimont.

It was the year 1896. The rest of the civilized world was eager, panting, jubilant with progress, reform, improvement, education; brains were teeming with Olympian intentions, with "millennial elevations of the masses," and vast and splendid projects; but here in this corner of France not even a ripple or a suspicion of these commotions reached. In neither Brimont-Aujillac, Brimont-Taube nor Taube-sur-Mer was there hint of electricity, steam, automobile, bicycle, photography, gas, waterworks, or any of the thousand and one things one calls the necessities. Once a week a diligence from Montpellier lumbered into Brimont-Aujillac, occasionally bringing a letter for the agent of the marquise from a merchant, or a visiting priest come to spend a saint's day or Sunday preaching to the young people who worked in the mills. No newspaper was published within a hundred miles of Brimont, no newspaper or magazine ever reached Brimont, save once, when the Abbé de la ToINETTE, the chaplain and confessor of the marquise and of mademoiselle, her sister, had brought back from his visit to Rome a copy of the *Corriere di Napoli*, the which, since it opened with a eulogy of the then reigning French emperor, was publicly burned by the marquise on the stone terrace, in the presence of the abbé, mademoiselle and the excellent Clémentine, the maid, who had presided for lo, these fifty years over those mysteries which

were condensed under the term of *la toilette*.

For the marquise, difficult as it is to understand in the said year of grace, 1896, was a royalist to the tips of her tapering fingers and her pointed and high-heeled little slippers.

She hated him whom she called "the upstart Corsican," and all his brood, with an undying hatred; with that hatred of the one regarded as a usurper which is only possible to a soul imbued with that mysterious passion known as loyalty to a lost and royal cause.

When, in 1848, the twenty-four-year-old bride of the Marquis de Brimont saw her splendid young husband sail across the straits, one of the few clinging to the fallen fortunes of Louis Philippe, sending her and her sister to the estate in Languedoc, her grand-mama, the old Comtesse de la Coutrée, had said, bidding her Godspeed from her deathbed in Paris:

"Go, my beloved grandchild, go to your own and your husband's people. Cherish and protect them; teach them to loath the Corsican, teach them to venerate and love the kingly house of Bourbon in all its branches. Teach them that although today the demagogues prevail, although tomorrow Corsica slips from his snake-hole and twists himself around the hearts of the French people, there is the day after tomorrow, my child, when, if you wait patiently, watch untiringly, prepare always, our king, Louis, the nineteenth of his name, will come into his own. Look ever toward the sea, and you shall behold the white flag flying, the lilies emblazoned on the silk, and let Brimont and the daughter of the house of de la Coutrée be ready; faithful even though you and Marie Sylvie live to be my age before he comes—still the nineteenth Louis will come to our house. My prophecy of his visit shall be fulfilled."

And for forty-eight years the marquise and Mademoiselle Marie Sylvie Amélie Adelaïde de la Coutrée had obeyed implicitly the commands of their grandparent.

The young Marquis de Brimont had early succumbed to the rigors of an English climate, and had passed out of this world with the names of his king and his fair young wife on his lips, devising to her solely the magnificent estates in Languedoc, and enjoining upon her to use all her immense fortune, if need be, in the cause of the royal house they both so ardently loved; never to relinquish the hope of the restoration; to look forward always to the hour when a nineteenth Louis should sit upon the throne.

These solemn injunctions the marquise had now, for nearly half a century, piously fulfilled, in so far as was possible to one who remained immured at the Château de Brimont, and had not in all that time been even so far as Montpellier; to one who was shut off, and away from, the whole trend and scope of modern impulse and thought, and who was precisely a bit of the eighteenth century in a setting as completely eighteenth century as herself.

When the young and beautiful little marquise had bade adieu to her husband and her king, had journeyed to Brimont-Taube from Paris, and jumped from the chaise, she instantly ran up the terrace, taking mademoiselle, then but sixteen, by the hand, up the narrow stone staircase which led to the chapel of the chateau. Once before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, she had prostrated herself, and, calling upon the patron saints to witness, had vowed never to leave Brimont until King Louis the Nineteenth should come there and into his own; and mademoiselle had duplicated this pious and loyal vow on the spot.

Nor had it been broken in either case for all these forty-and-eight years.

Every morning a mass was sung in the little chapel "for the king"; every evening the rich pink brocade gowns, the point lace capes and frills, the pink rose coronets, the diamond parures, the pink shoes, the mitts and fans and bracelets were all laid out in the dressing-rooms by Clémentine, lest his majesty should arrive that day, perchance, for dinner.

Every night the candles were set in the windows that looked toward the sea, far up in the very top of the tower of the chateau, lest his majesty's ship, peradventure, might that very night come sailing into the little Bay of Taube. And in the late autumn and winter, when the storms broke over the coast and when the great winds from the snow-clad mountains whipped and spurred and churned the sea into whirlpools of dismay and black depths of sucking, prey-seeking horror, when the thunder split the waters into mountains of death, when the lightning laughed and jeered among the awful clouds, when the shore piled high with wreckage and the fishermen's wives shuddered for the boats that were not yet come home, then the marquise climbed the tower stairs and knelt with her rosary in her fingers and prayed that the king's ship might not be coming this time. Then mademoiselle crawled down to the chapel, and with Clémentine and the good abbé repeated *aves* and *pater nosters* innumerable for the safety of his majesty the king, should he be on the great deep. Then the fishermen's wives and children asked God to preserve their husbands and fathers and their king as well, and all the honorable ladies in the neighboring chateaux, and all the good nuns of the convent at Brimont-Aujillac also fell piously and religiously upon their knees and invoked heaven's protection upon the king, who might possibly be, even now, voyaging toward his country.

For the three places, all one in a sense, since they were comprised in the estates of the marquise and her sister—Brimont-Aujillac, Brimont-Taube and little, scrawny Taube-sur-Mer—were royalists to a man, and looked forward—as much as they did to anything, for the French peasant adventures very slightly into the future—to the return of the sovereign for whom they had been instructed, for nearly fifty years now, to watch.

That this state of affairs was possible in imperial and republican France may seem an anomaly, if not a piece

of fiction. It is not fiction, nor is it anomalous. To one who knows the byways, the forgotten places, the unvisited villages of France, the splendid castles, the extended dependencies, the almost feudal maintenances at this day flourishing there, untouched by either imperial decree or republican fiat, the perfect reality of corporate bodies of people living in absolute security from the whirl of the outside world and entirely ignored by the government which prevails over the rest of the land, is not impossible.

Such corners there are, where someone, some power, some sentiment, some spirit of loyalty, chivalry, has at a critical moment in a country's history laid a strong, arrestive finger on the pulse of '48, say, and said to it, "Thus far and no farther." And the years come and go and the empire crumbles and the free state arises and men scheme and women plot and children learn to salute the new flags, and old men take to new wines and ways; but here at Brimont people fly the white flag with the Bourbon lilies embroidered on it when the day of St. Louis comes around, and no one says them nay or pays any attention to them whatever.

It is true that when the young marquise beheld, on the morning after her arrival at the chateau, the Napoleon column and the Napoleon statue staring her straight in the face from the window on the grand staircase landing, she felt an immediate impulse to order it felled to the earth and thrown into the sea. But, upon consulting with the abbé, she contented herself with having the window walled up and a medallion of Louis the Sixteenth placed in the outer niche in such a position as to give back the Corsican look for look.

No violet was allowed to grow in the grounds of the Château de Brimont; bees were chased by the marquise and mademoiselle as if they had beenadders.

"Horrible emblems of the Corsican trickster!" cried the marquise, even this very morning, as she sat upon the terrace sipping her chocolate, when an

adventurous honey-seeker came to breakfast with her in the sugar-bowl.

"Away with it, Clémentine!" cried her mistress, and Clémentine, although turned seventy, flew nimbly after the offensive and imperial insect.

"Ah, good morning, Monsieur l'Abbé," added the marquise, as the holy man came hobbling up the steps.

"Good morning, mesdames," bowing low to both the ladies, whom he had indeed seen already in the chapel at the early daily mass.

"I am then pleased to congratulate you both," with another bow, "on your laying aside of mourning for his late majesty of blessed memory, King Philippe the Seventh."

Whereupon all three of these grand old people devoutly crossed themselves, exactly as they had done forty-six years before for Louis Philippe, and later for Henry the Fifth, when the periods for wearing black for these illustrious sovereigns had elapsed.

The marquise now smoothed out the pink ribbon which ornamented her bodice, and, shaking the little regiments of black curls which stood out at either side of her brilliantly and freshly painted cheeks, she said:

"It is time, monsieur. This morning I bade Clémentine bring our rouge-pots from their hiding-places and let the roses once again bloom in our faces; for, monsieur"—and here the marquise rapped on the stone pavement emphatically with her gold-headed cane—"surely, soon now, we may look for our king; the nineteenth Louis must be on his way."

To all of the above mademoiselle gave docile assent by nods and smilings and little "oh's" and "ah's." She seemed to be, in all respects save one, but the echo of her sister, the marquise. "As befits an unmarried woman," held the married one, "even though her years may number into the sixties."

The abbé, docile also, still had views of his own, and with a slowly wagging head and a deliberate pinch of snuff, he replied:

"Alas, mesdames!"—the abbé always

said "mesdames," thus obviating the necessity of making any separate acknowledgment of mademoiselle's existence—"alas, mesdames, so far as I can learn from the meagre reports which come to us, there is some rumor that his majesty will assume the title of Philippe the Eighth, although this is by no means certain."

"Absurd!" cried both ladies in a breath. "It was already decided long since that his majesty would assume the throne as Louis the Nineteenth, and assuredly since neither Henry the Fifth nor Philippe the Seventh was received with the enthusiasm which was their divine right, it is but common sense to turn one's luck and place the nation under the direct protection of its patron, Saint Louis, by continuing the succession in his blessed name."

"Very true, mesdames," returned the abbé, tendering his snuffbox with an equal grace to each of his companions; "yet it is also true that common sense is a quality which maintains a very different foundation in different minds."

"Can it be possible," cried the marquise, lifting her bright little eyes to the sky and her thin little hands in the air, while mademoiselle duplicated these movements to perfection, "can it be possible that we shall be called upon to mourn for another of our kings in exile, before the prophecy of our revered and sainted grandmama shall come to its fulfilment? No, monsieur, no!" The marquise rose and paced up and down the terrace in the sunshine, tapping off its length with the click of her little red heels and the tip of her cane.

"I tell you I feel it. I, Renée Marie Alphonsine Laure, Marquise de Brimont, born de la Coutrée, am sure that on me the mantle of my grandmama now falls, when I inform you that it will not be long before France rises to greet the restoration, before the king will come for his visit to us. I, too, can prophesy as our sainted grandmama did!"

Mademoiselle had also risen and was hopping up and down the terrace ex-

actly behind her sister, in perfect reproduction of all save voice; mademoiselle rarely raised her voice.

"To welcome," continued the marquise, the regiments of curls quivering with excitement, "Louis the Nineteenth to his own. Believe me, monsieur, and mademoiselle," concluded the marquise, taking up her cup of chocolate, "for, at our age"—she now spoke succinctly, leaving declamation in the rear—"one may not hope to mourn a Philippe the Eighth and survive to greet his successor. If our esteemed grandmama prophesied truly, then are we on the edge of a great revolution, a revolution which restores the Bourbon lilies to their white field, which gives to us and our downtrodden countrymen the enlightenments and benefits of a kingly rule."

By which it may be inferred that the marquise, notwithstanding her years, still could play the role of partisan with force.

Mademoiselle nodded as she also took up her chocolate-cup. The abbé pulled from his pocket a little worn volume of sermons, and, adjusting his horn-rimmed spectacles, was turning the well-thumbed leaves when the marquise covered the sugar-bowl with that peculiar vehemence which caused mademoiselle gently to touch the abbé's shoulder, in turn causing the abbé to close his book, grimace his spectacles off his queer little nose, and turn once again back to the marquise.

Clearing her throat, playing a tripping minuet tune with her little fingers on the polished top of the table, her voice shaking somewhat, the marquise began in a high and strident tone:

"I have to inform you, monsieur, and you, my sister, that I have sent for Maître Tonton at Brimont-Aujillac, to come, and, for the fourth time, alter our wills; first, all was left to his majesty Louis Philippe; then to the others of our well-beloved sovereigns in the order of their several successions; it now becomes necessary and not longer to be delayed." Here the marquise paused as she had thrice before paused in this identical speech, and Monsieur l'Abbé

at once fills the breach precisely as he had filled it on all the former occasions.

"Not longer to be delayed," repeats the old man, "considering the uncertainty of life, the advanced age of mesdames, and the unscrupulous dealings of those who may be left here after their departure."

"Exactly," nodded the marquise. "Maître Tonton will make the new documents in favor of His Most Catholic Majesty, Louis the Nineteenth, King of France. Mademoiselle"—the little lady turns dictatorially to her sister—"you will, of course, see to it that Maître Tonton draws up a new will for you at the same time."

Mademoiselle courtesied to this as, in point of fact, she had always courtesied to all that her sister had said or done, since she was sixteen and had been brought to live at Brimont-Taube—except one thing. Once upon a time mademoiselle refused to echo, declined to courtesy. It was when she was celebrating her seventeenth birthday. Of her own volition the young girl had chosen that time to vow herself to the Virgin and to celibacy, until France should once more acknowledge a king; to dedicate her fortunes to the house of Bourbon and never to marry until a king of France could give her his consent and blessing—Mademoiselle Marie Sylvie Amélie Adelaïde de la Coutrée being, or would have been, had there been a reigning monarch, a ward of the king.

This vow was taken at six o'clock in the morning in the chapel of the chateau, in the presence of the Abbé de la Toinette, the marquise, all the servants and dependents of the estate; also before the high altar and the good God and all His saints and martyrs.

It is quite true that at that time mademoiselle had no suitor.

It is also true that by seven o'clock that night a suitor came in the person of the Chevalier Pierre de St. Joreaux, a gentleman of noble lineage, noble character and the grand manners of the old regime; of so handsome a face that mademoiselle had remarked the same to Clémentine, and had in the making

of her morning vow not left out of consideration the sad fact that the chevalier always kept a great distance from her when they met at the houses of friends or at the chase and seemed riveted to some spot always within eye reach, but never nearer.

Therefore it was doubly cruel that the Chevalier Pierre, having stolen a moment and borrowed heart of grace from the starlight and told mademoiselle of his passion for her, should have to hear of the dedication of his lady love to the fortunes of the house of Bourbon!

"It is but a girl's excuse!" cried the chevalier, in wrath, after listening to mademoiselle's hurried recital. "It is indeed! Figure to yourself! I, too, mademoiselle, am loyal to my king, but I see very plainly that it is rather the hump on my back than the lost crown of our sovereign which bids you decline my suit!" For the chevalier was indeed a hunchbacked man.

Whereupon mademoiselle had fallen weeping straight into the arms of her lover just as her sister, the marquise, had come out on the terrace with the abbé and a torch to look for her.

And so it came to pass that at this point mademoiselle refused to echo or to courtesy to the decree of her elder. The marquise said that the chevalier must go and never return. Mademoiselle said that twice every week the chevalier should be permitted, since this was his humble request, to come and see her, and that once the king at Brimont-Taube, once the white emblem floating on the tower of the chateau to welcome him, then she would marry the chevalier, whether it might be next week or a hundred years hence.

But the days and the months and the years came and went, and no king's ship sailed into the Bay of Taube and no wedding bells rang for mademoiselle; but the chevalier came twice a week still, just as he had in the beginning. And while the marquise and the abbé played chess in the salon, mademoiselle and the chevalier walked in the gardens under the box trees cut in the shape of birds and castles; or in

winter they paced up and down the gallery, from the walls of which stared the portraits of the long line of the kings and queens and dauphins of the house of Bourbon, the glorious Henri Quatre, all the great and little men named Louis, Anne of Austria, Marie Antoinette, Louis the Seventeenth, the hapless child of the Temple who never felt the weight of crown or sceptre, and whose strange and not known fate still aches at our hearts when we stop to think of him. All these were the witnesses and chaperons when the chevalier, no higher than mademoiselle's shoulder, but the soul of gallantry for all his lacking inches, would tenderly whisper—ah! just as tenderly tonight when he was seventy and his charmer sixty-eight as long ago in the June time of their youth.

"But, Marie, my well beloved, indeed I believe I have served very faithfully and patiently, and I am of the opinion that his Holiness the Pope would listen favorably to an application, through Monsieur l'Abbé, for a release from your vow. Eh, my dear child, what do you say?" And the chevalier now raised to his lips the small and still white and pretty hand of mademoiselle.

"But no, monsieur; imagine," returned Marie Sylvie gently, "one could not ask to be released from a vow of that nature. It is for our king, Pierre." Mademoiselle's voice sank to as tender a whisper as when she was a girl, and her curls quivered each side of her cheeks, like those of the marquise. "Pierre, I shall be yours some day when our king comes."

"Ah, always the same response! Well, then, suppose our king never comes?" inquired the chevalier testily.

"That is impossible. We have already buried their late majesties." Mademoiselle crossed herself. "That was to be expected, since grandmama said we were to be patient until Louis the Nineteenth came. She spoke with her dying breath. Monsieur l'Abbé says, beyond a doubt, the good Saint Louis dictated her words. And now, do you not think, my dear friend, that

the hour, the moment, must be at hand when the message telling of his visit will arrive from his majesty, saying——?"

The sharp clank of a horse's hoofs on the roadway, the clash of the iron gates, the hobble of the abbé across the great hall, the click of the marquise's heels and the tap of the marquise's cane; the opening of the great doors as the horse comes to a sudden standstill; voices—all these sounds arrest the speech of mademoiselle and cause her and the chevalier to turn and hasten down the gallery, where all the Bourbons are watching them, and cross out into the great hall and join the others.

They arrive just as Philibert, the innkeeper from Brimont-Aujillac, is bowing himself out of the door. Clémentine holds a double candelabra high up in the air, the marquise is on tiptoe, while the abbé, having settled his spectacles, stares hard at the superscription of a large, white, square envelope which he has received at the hands of his patroness.

#### IV

"WELL, well, monsieur, is it thus that I must wait for a man of your learning and accomplishments to decipher the address of a letter!" The marquise tapped the parquet angrily with her cane, while the chevalier whispered to mademoiselle:

"Now, God grant this be a letter from the king!"

"Um—um—um!" murmured the worthy priest, sore beset by his first introduction to a strictly modern handwriting.

"Just heaven! Monsieur l'Abbé!" cried the marquise, in a tempest, "is it for this that I have harbored you for these forty-odd years in order that you might not only minister to our spiritual needs, but read our letters, cast up our accounts, et cetera, et cetera, now to have you set gaping at the sight of a letter that may be——?" Here the marquise almost choked with her emotions, and seized the letter with no gentle hand.

"I will read it myself!" she exclaimed, as Clémentine held the candelabra higher still above her mistress's shoulder, and the chevalier struck a tinder and lighted a torch, while he and mademoiselle gathered close about the marquise in open-mouthed and extraordinary impatience.

"Yes, mesdames," answered the abbé solemnly and respectfully; "if you can."

The marquise peered; so did mademoiselle, also the chevalier, likewise Clémentine, who could not read at all.

Then the marquise, stamping her foot so that all the other four jumped with terror, thrust the letter back into the abbé's hands and commanded:

"Read it, monsieur, if you know how to read at all. If you cannot I must at once procure a chaplain whose education is not so lacking!"

They waited a minute, perhaps two or three, when the old man slowly spelled out, "To Madame la Marquise de Brimont, Brimont-Taube, Languedoc, France."

"Aha!" cried the marquise, "it is then for me! And the postmark is——?"

"Paris," returned the abbé, reading so much with ease.

"Now, mesdames," he added, looking, however, as always, only at the marquise, "at your orders?"

"It will be best to open it, I should say," said the marquise, "since you, monsieur, seem unable to devise its origin otherwise."

"That is quite the fact," returned the abbé, meekly ignoring the scorn of his benefactress.

"Stop! Since it may be from his sacred majesty, it is best that I should cut the envelope with my own hands!"

The marquise received from Clémentine a pair of pocket scissors, and slit open the envelope. She unfolded the broad square sheet, and, with an air of tender reverence, held it before the eyes of the abbé, for in fact the marquise was no scholar.

"Read, monsieur," she said.

So, while the chevalier and Clémentine held the lights, while mademoiselle

held her breath and the marquise held the paper, the abbé began. After many pauses and innumerable stumblings, he succeeded in reading Pauline's letter to her great-grandaunts, and to the attendant Clémentine.

For fully a minute after he had finished all four stood perfectly motionless, and then the abbé respectfully drew back and took a large pinch of snuff.

The marquise peered at the missive, which she held off from her in a species of still questioning dismay.

"The Americans!" she exclaimed, breaking the spell of the silence, with a tone that might fittingly have been employed toward cannibals.

"Not from the king!" said mademoiselle ruefully and with a sigh.

"For the fortune of mesdames," remarked the abbé succinctly, taking more snuff and withdrawing toward the warmth of the chimney-side.

"Never!" cried the marquise.

"Never!" echoed mademoiselle.

"If what the lady says in her letter is true she is the legal heir to the estates," said the abbé.

"And does not my will, as well as that of Marie Sylvie, my sister, stand, in spite of a hundred legal heirs?" asked the marquise, now trembling with excitement.

"Assuredly," answered the abbé; "but we will only say that the visit of these ladies portends a knowledge on their part of the facts of their relationship and claims."

"That for their claims!" cried the marquise, tearing Pauline's letter in two. "Shall we not do what we please with our own? Because my brother Léonce Lionel de la Coutrée was such a fool as to leave France and emigrate to some God-forsaken place across the sea, there to marry and have a daughter, who also marries, has a son, who is, one may suppose, the father of this most insolent young person—must we then forget our vows, our sovereign, our principles of loyalty, our centuries of devotion to the great house of Bourbon? Speak, Monsieur l'Abbé, speak and tell us that!"

"Mesdames," replied the old man,

spreading his lean hands to the blaze behind him, "it is to be remembered that these Americans probably know nothing about the house of Bourbon; that for them, in their aboriginal wildness, their doubtless untamed and almost savage simplicity, the grand sentiments of loyalty, fidelity, royal divinity, are absolutely unknown."

"Ah!" The marquise nodded comprehendingly.

"Ah-h-h!" Mademoiselle nodded in like manner.

"I have heard, when I was in Rome," continued the abbé, "that civilization in those remote countries is mainly comprised in a thirst for gold, for riches at any price."

"Ah-h!" and "ah!" repeated the ladies, with increasing intelligence.

"Then it will be at once the best plan for you, Monsieur l'Abbé, to write to them a statement of facts: that the fortunes of both mademoiselle and myself are irrevocably left to his sacred majesty, Louis the Nineteenth, and——"

"And, pardon, mesdames," interrupted the priest; "one must not forget that the usurping government of a vile republic still holds the reins in our unhappy France. Caution, caution! It would be more discreet not to name the beneficiary under the wills."

Both the sisters bowed a grateful and admiring assent to so much of worldly wisdom.

"It is to be believed beyond a doubt," added the old man, rejoiced at his diplomatic success, "that when these American ladies receive the news of the disposition of the property of mesdames they will reconsider the affair of a visit to Languedoc."

"Ah, the good, the wise, the excellent la Toinette!" cried the marquise. "What would become of us, Marie Sylvie, without his counsels? So, with the polite letter that he will write tonight he will destroy for us the terrors of an acquaintance with these descendants of our absurd brother; he will put the death-blow to the avaricious hopes of these Americans."

But with all the courtly, gracious and positively outspoken terms of his epistle, the desired end was not gained by its composition and sending to the Hôtel Petit St. Eustache. By no means, for by return post there arrived another letter to the marquise from her affectionate great-grandniece, written more in sorrow than in anger, and professing a simple and natural wish to know her late father's relatives, and avowing such a horror and contempt of the implication put upon her first missive as now rent the souls, not only of the marquise and made-moiselle, but of the politic old churchman as well.

"You see," cried the marquise, as she listened to Pauline's second quotation, "these Americans! they cannot all be as savage as represented. They still wish to see us, although they know that the fortunes are impossible for them. They must come—eh, my sister and Monsieur l'Abbé?—not to the inn, but to the Château de Brimont. It must never be credited that the descendants of one even so wilful and democratic as our late brother Léonce Lionel were lodged anywhere but beneath the roof of his sisters."

Both the abbé and Marie Sylvie indorsed this procedure; and a second letter was mailed to the Hôtel Petit St. Eustache, bidding Pauline and her mother welcome to the chateau.

Yet Miss Ackerman, who, despite her lack of many years, had nevertheless acquired a very distinct appreciation of the wisdom of going slow, decided that they would stop first at the inn at Brimont-Aujillac, and thence would ride the three miles to the chateau on the afternoon of their arrival.

Accordingly, after breakfast at one o'clock, both Mrs. and Miss Ackerman came out into the courtyard of the Lion d'Or, and, much to the astonishment of the innkeeper and his wife, the maid and the hostler, mounted those two singular-looking machines—from which, oh, every saint! these ladies must presently fall to their

death! But no, away they glide like ducks upon the deepest water; skimming the narrow road as the wind does, and, heaven be thanked, no broken bones so far as they could be seen.

They had inquired the shortest way to the chateau, which, proving to be a mere lane, trodden down compactly by the cows and sheep, gave them no other prospect than the lovely level fields in their varying shades of green, the soft blue of the sky, the shadow of oaks, the tinkle-tinkle of the little Taube River, where the fleurs-de-lis were already beginning to flaunt their royal tinge, in stalks full of buds, all up and down the stream.

"They had never seen a bicycle before, mother, only think!" cried Pauline.

"It seems absurd," returned the older woman, as the two glided on, single file, in the sweet warmth of the day.

"Pauline," added the mother, "those must be the towers of the chateau. Are you nervous?"

Miss Ackerman threw a glance of amused and scornful defiance over her shoulder, for of course the daughter, being of her nationality, was in the lead.

"Do I look so?"

Indeed she did not. In a quite correct costume of dark gray, with a soft felt hat, also gloves and gaiters of gray; with the bloom of youth, health, anticipation, ambition and intoxication on her pretty, round cheeks, Pauline presented anything but a nervous appearance.

But before her mother could reply to her query both women gave utterance to a decidedly nervous scream and nearly came to grief in the road, for at the bend there reared a fat donkey, his saddlebags bursting with live fowls, these cackling with all their might, while the late rider, a plump monk, knelt in the dust, crossing himself and shivering with terror as Pauline and her mother whirled past him. His moans were piteous, and the braying of the donkey and the

wailing of the corded hens most appalling.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Mrs. Ackerman. "The man is frightened out of his wits, I suppose. This certainly is Arcadia. I wonder if the old aunties have never seen a bicycle, either!"

"Who cares whether they have or not!" answered Pauline. "If they object I'll break mine up before their eyes. Say, mother, am I O. K.? My violets straight?"

"Yes; are mine?"

"You're as fit as a ten-franc glove. Now," added the young woman, "here we are."

They passed between the open gates into the park of the Château de Brimont and proceeded up the beautiful driveway, through the magnificent gardens, in and out where the terraces ran at either side, where fountains played and where the sun shone like gold over their coming.

"And this"—the young girl rose in her seat, and the red, splendid blood rushed over her face as she took in the vast prospect spread before her eyes, took in the superb castle, feudal in its size and bearings—"this, then, is my inheritance!"

"Hush!" exclaimed the mother. "They're on the terrace. Look between those shrubs, and you can see two old ladies and an old man. The man, I should say, is a priest."

Yes, mesdames and the abbé were on the terrace. They beheld the advent of the two strangers, and piously crossed themselves. The marquise and her sister fled into the house. They had never seen nor even heard of a bicycle, nor yet had their confessor, who hobbled off to his oratory.

From the vantage ground of the salon, behind the window curtains, they said to each other solemnly:

"The end of the world is indeed near! Oh, the shamelessness, the iniquity, the impious disrespect! Skirts midway of the—let us not mention the word even, for toward the good God and all His saints one must be polite! And hold! violets! violets! And these

are the Americans! Where is Clémentine? Give her the small brass fire-tongs. Send her out with the respectful compliments of madame la marquise, and let her, with courtesy, but with firmness, pluck the abominable flowers from the bodices of the relatives of our late brother, Albert Léonce Lionel, and inform them that at the Château de Brimont the emblem of the Corsican must burn and cannot bloom. And let our excellent Clémentine bring from our armoires two silk skirts, and let her assist at the decent toilet of these ladies, making them presentable in the eyes of the world. Let her send refreshments to them in the boudoir, after the toilet is complete. Let her order Jacques or Jules—if they will touch them!—to hide away those monstrosities of the devil upon which those ladies arrived. Let Monsieur l'Abbé emerge from his modest retirement and greet them and escort them into the presence of madame la marquise and mademoiselle!"

All of which was done with great politeness by Clémentine, Jacques, Jules—trembling and in terror, with prayers—and the abbé.

It may be supposed that both Mrs. and Miss Ackerman were mystified with these proceedings, and that it was very fortunate for all those concerned that English was an unknown quantity for the majority.

When the boutonnieres were nimbly wrested from them with the fire-tongs and when the gorgeous white silk skirts, flowered respectively in red and green, were cast deftly over their bicycle garb, Pauline, divided between laughter and anger, cried:

"What do you suppose this means, mother?"

"I'm sure I don't know! Are you going to submit to such ridiculous incivility? My goodness gracious alive! I'm a sight to behold in this full skirt!"

"Am I going to submit?" laughed Pauline, surveying herself in the mirror, while Clémentine held a hand-glass before her and dashed Cologne

water over her hands. "I like that! I'm going to submit to anything on earth, and so are you, dear, to gain my ends. Ah! isn't this a foretaste of the future? For behold, for the first time in her life Pauline de la Coutrée-Ackerman has the services of a lady's-maid. Who cares what the dear old frumps' ideas are, so long as the day comes when I shall reign here!"

And Miss Ackerman thanked Clémentine in such a pretty way as quite to win over the aged woman's heart.

When at last, thus strangely arrayed, the mother and daughter were solemnly conducted by the abbé down into the grand salon they beheld the marquise and mademoiselle both standing at the far end of the room. A series of profound courtesies followed, performed, it must be admitted, with equal grace on both sides, while the abbé duly announced the visitors by name.

The marquise for a moment surveyed her guests and the juncture promised to be a trifle uncomfortable, as might be expected when, with remote ideas, if any, of each other, a half-century ago looks into the eyes of today.

Of course it was the young girl who took the initiative. With a little run—much admired and duly instilled by Reeb as indicative of the runaway sweet impulses of youth—Pauline covered the sixty feet of polished floor which separated her from her relatives, made a beautiful courtesy on reaching them, seized the hand of the marquise in both of hers, kissed it respectfully, duplicated all of this for mademoiselle, and then cast her lovely eyes up to their withered countenances. Her pouting lips received the answer they seemed so innocently to crave. Pauline in a trice was gathered to the hearts of her great-grandaunts; youth, beauty and ruse had their usual effect, while the mother looked on with sympathetic smiles and nods.

With the most delightful ingenuousness Pauline contrived to apologize for the short skirts, the awful bicycles, the atrocious violets, not quite com-

prehending why she should, but attaining the object of making the old ladies believe that adverse circumstances alone had coerced their guests into all these unseemly things.

Then Mrs. Ackerman took from her satchel a packet of time-stained letters—those written at the dictation of the marquise and mademoiselle themselves by this very same dear old Abbé de la Toinette—see! the signature!—to their exiled and disinherited brother, Albert Léonce Lionel, in Louisiana in the year 1840, and sacredly preserved by his descendants, proving that Pauline was indeed their brother's great-grandchild and no impostor.

The joy of these old ladies as they beheld this young girl, who indeed resembled much the portrait of the marquise taken in her eighteenth year; their agitation as they insisted that their newly found relatives should come at once to the chateau and spend a month with them; the shy, proud reluctance of Pauline and her amiable mother; the final yielding to solicitation; the despatching of Jules at once for the luggage of mesdames at the inn; the showing them to the suite of rooms already prepared for them; the ringing of the angelus bell on their way through the grand gallery; the pious falling upon her knees of their young great-grandniece—contriving, as she did so, to twitch her gasping mama's gown, and so pull her into line with her surroundings; the sweet simplicity of Pauline as she beheld the sumptuously furnished rooms, the glowing fires, the exquisite toilet-tables, the splendid mirrors, the Beauvais tapestries, the cloth-of-gold hangings; her naive and dutiful admiration of the carved *prie-dieu*; her reverential awe at the head of the stag which a king had killed—all this and much more one might have observed before the heavy oaken door closed, the heavy portière was drawn and the guests were alone together.

They exchanged glances, and almost in one breath exclaimed:

"Heaven be praised! I thought they would never go."

And Pauline added, as she threw herself upon a lounge whose down quilt of blue satin billowed about her, and kicked off her boots and leggings:

"Mother, we are guests at the Château de Brimont."

Mrs. Ackerman, heated with the effort incident to getting out of the white and green brocade skirt, heaved a sigh and nodded.

"You're your mother's own daughter," she said, now standing in the midst of the pool of silk.

"I'm myself," replied the younger woman, in a low, haughty tone.

Inheritance so impinges upon individuality that it is frequently difficult to determine where the one ends and the other begins. There was a fair slice of the land promoter's helpmeet in the composition of the slender, beautiful young person who presently sat up at the desk which had once belonged to Marie Antoinette, and wrote a brief account of her experiences, since seeing him, to the Duc de Monplaisir.

The closing paragraph of his fiancée's letter ran thus:

All this goes well, as you see. It now remains for me to take the best way that presents itself to inform my excellent great-aunts of my engagement to one whom, perhaps, they will not approve; then to introduce him to them as their much desired Louis the Nineteenth! Figure to yourself their consternation, surprise, joy; at least so I hope, for, to be frank, the name of his majesty, although I carefully led up to it, was received by them in total silence. Still, we will suppose that their delight will be as great as your man has caused you to believe. Next, they will bid you come to the chateau; you will set out. Well, one can't say it will fall out just so and so, but I pledge you a kiss, Louis, that in less than a fortnight you will receive word to pack up your royal garments and come to Languedoc! Write me at the inn; it can be brought over by one of the valets, or I myself will stop there for it. Four horses and a lot of handsome old-fashioned carriages have been placed at our disposal; also there are about forty servants for the chateau alone. Already, monsieur, I see the crown upon your brows! It is extraordinarily hard to set oneself back—as one would a clock, for example—for actually these people are exactly as you said you had been informed—in the last century entirely. Reeb had her uses, for had I not studied with her plays of

that epoch I should be lost. As it is, it amuses me to act the role of an ingénue of the reign of Louis the Eighteenth. *Au revoir*, Louis de Bourbon!

Always yours,

PAULINE.

And it is quite true, too, that day by day both Pauline and her mother enjoyed the, to them, novel existence of the Château de Brimont. Had it not possessed a definite aim, it is equally true that this life would have palled; but the fine exhilaration of the object, the increasing growth toward the climax, the subtle flavor of the plan which harbored behind the girl's lightest word or most apparently casual action, gave such an impetus and relish to her time as made her a thousand-fold more buoyant than she had ever been before. Success is superb, but it is a fact that the confident struggle for it possesses a diviner salt.

Then the luxurious style of the chateau—the troops of servants; the equipages; the occasional formal visits of the Comte de Frijac, the Prince d'Oxillac and their families; all these people of the long ago, each as ignorant of the affairs of the world of the present as if it were still unborn, were interesting beyond measure. Even the daily mass in the chapel and the visits to the convent were tolerated, because with them all came the delirious homage of grand manners which is very grateful indeed to most republican persons, and was especially so to the unaccustomed souls of Mrs. and Miss Ackerman.

What castles the girl built! What splendid jewels she set upon her handsome head! What troops of people who had regarded her disdainfully in the past she flouted with unprecedented splendors! What good deeds she did to those who had been kind to her! What amateur theatricals she gave at Newport and New York for charity! What races on land and sea she won! What gowns and ermines and sables she bought! What scores of men wrote her down "the reigning beauty" as her coach tooled up the drive! And of her lover—what of him?

There is a spade which, put into the

hand of youth, digs love's grave, and the name of the spade is Ambition, and the day comes when youth, looking backward, curses the spade and clamors for love's resurrection; but this seldom comes.

Pauline Ackerman was wholly absorbed in the pursuit of her object, and if once in awhile the old sweet belief in love for love's own sake knocked at her heart, she stilled the beat with the intimate knowledge that de Monplaisir would not marry her unless she could in some way provide the where-withal. There were other men in the world besides de Monplaisir. Yes, but Pauline and her mother were unanimous in thinking that a duke in the hand was worth any other man in the bush, especially a duke who had introduced them to the broad estates of de Brimont and de la Coutrée.

Pauline had been out for a drive. The marquise and mademoiselle seldom drove—the motion fatigued them; so the girl, as her mother remained with her hostesses, had been off by herself, and had stopped at the inn, where an urgent letter from her lover awaited her. She drove home quickly, at once went to her room, exchanged her blue gown for a simple white one, with no ribbons, no jewels, just a spray of lily-of-the-valley, where the laces crossed at her throat. She took the duke's letter in her hand and stood surveying herself, for she heard her mother's footstep in the corridor, and wished to be assured that the marquise was alone before she went downstairs.

The marquise was not alone. Mademoiselle was with her, and as Mrs. Ackerman left, the abbé entered her boudoir.

"My daughter," he said, "I think it is now time for you to speak a little of our king; I counseled silence upon the subject until I should acquaint myself somewhat with the characters of these ladies. There is no danger. Where I thought that the violets might indicate a sympathy with the usurper I find it merely to have been accident. This pure young girl only yesterday said to her estimable mother in my hearing as

she gazed upon the portrait of his majesty, Louis the Seventeenth, of martyred memory, 'Look, mother; is not that the face of a royal boy? Has he not the face of a monarch—that beautiful young Bourbon! Ah, how I venerate such misfortunes!' You perceive, mesdames," continued the abbé, "that your new-found relations, although Americans and not to be regarded too seriously, still will be in sympathy with us all, and the fête of our blessed St. Louis may be appropriately kept, as it is our custom, with prayers for his majesty, Louis the Nineteenth."

"God be praised!" cried both ladies in unison.

"I shall this day," added the marquise, "impart to my great-grandniece the loyalty of our house and the sacred cause and name of him to whom we leave our patrimonies. Eh, Marie Sylvie?"

Mademoiselle bowed her head. She saw the long shadow of the little chevalier coming up the gardens ahead of the chevalier himself, and she slipped out the window and pattered up the path to meet him.

"If I am not grievously mistaken, mesdames," the abbé continued, quite ignoring Marie Sylvie's exit, "you will find in Mademoiselle Pauline a most perfect concord with your most pious arrangements. I have made human nature the study of a long life, mesdames, and it is not at the age of eighty-three that I shall find myself mistaken. Ah, no!" And the abbé, who had only lately come in contact with the intricacies of what may be summed up as modernity, walked out of the marquise's boudoir, taking snuff and much satisfaction in his own astuteness—just as Pauline walked in at the upper door.

"May I enter and bid you good morning, madame grandaunt?" asked the young girl, halting at the threshold and courtesying low; for Miss Ackerman, with the wonderful adaptability of her countrywomen, had long since absorbed the charming formalisms of intercourse which she found prevailing at the Château de Brimont.

"Certainly, my dear child," replied the marquise, "and very apropos, since I was just now wishing to see you; I have something to say to you of importance—great importance. Sit down, Pauline."

Pauline hesitated, as she drew the high ottoman up beside the marquise.

"Madame grandaunt"—she half faltered, pressing the duke's letter tightly between her fingers—"will you allow me to say that I have something to tell you—something of the greatest importance to me; something for which, oh, my beloved grandaunt, I wish to ask your benediction, your approval?" Miss Ackerman now cast herself, with the grace of Reeb, upon the stately ottoman and clasped her hands imploringly toward the marquise, while the least hint of tears quivered in her voice.

"My child," cried the marquise, much moved, "I pray of you do not hesitate. Confide in me, and if your project merits it—as I am sure it must—my benediction shall be yours. What is it, then, my Pauline?"

"My betrothal," answered the girl, with downcast eyes and reddening cheeks.

"Ah-h!" exclaimed the old lady. "Here indeed we are in the midst of something very interesting. Marriage—that is a great step, my child, and doubtless your excellent mama has looked to it before this that the *parti* selected is a desirable one?"

"My mother has consented, but, madame grandaunt, you, as the head of our house, at least on my late father's side, are the one whose approval I seek. Oh, madame grandaunt, he is so noble, so handsome, so all that one can desire!"

"Hold!" smiled the older woman. "That is youth, that is enthusiasm, that is nature. Tell me, my child, who is your fiancé?"

Pauline now lowered her eyes again and swept the tail of her long gown pathetically around her feet. She sighed.

"Madame grandaunt, he is almost an exile; he is heavily in debt; he is re-

garded with scorn by those who should acknowledge him as their chief; he is proscribed, watched; he dare not display even the coat of arms of his house; he who should command in castles and palaces now resides in a shabby apartment in the rue Trouchet." Thus Miss Ackerman described, quite fittingly, she fancied, the social state of the Bourbon heir, and she was not too far afield.

"Ah?" responded the marquise. "But this is all very unfortunate, my dear Pauline, for since you have no fortune, what, then, will you and this penniless young gentleman live upon?" The old marquise began to fear that after all the young American had but arrived at Brimont for the purpose of enlisting her substantial sympathies.

Miss Ackerman at once felt the situation and met it with the watchword incident to the supposed circumstances all the world over.

"On love!" she exclaimed, with shining eyes. "Love and hope and faith."

"Fine things," rejoined the old lady, "but shadowy. What is the name of this young man, Pauline?"

"His name is—Louis. He is known as the Duc de Monplaisir."

"Aha! a title I do not recognize. Doubtless invented by the Corsican," she added to herself, with a curling lip and a restive tap of her cane on the floor.

"Madame grandaunt, you disapprove? I feared that you would! Oh, I implore of you, do not keep back your benediction from me. Louis and I are going to America to make our fortunes, and I could not bear the thought of leaving France without your approval. Besides," she added falteringly, twisting de Monplaisir's letter in her hands, "he desires to know if he may come to de Brimont to see me—to pay his respects to you and mademoiselle—he has heard much of you."

"From you, doubtless." The marquise rose and opened the velvet-lined drawer of one of the toilet-tables in the adjoining room. She took from it a beautiful necklace of corals and

diamonds, not costly but well suited to a young person.

"Before he knew of me," Pauline answered.

The marquise clasped the necklace around her great-grandniece's neck and put a little pecking, bird-like kiss on her forehead.

"Now, the good God bless you, my child," she said. "At this moment it is most fitting that I should communicate to you the reason why you can never inherit either the fortune of my sister or my own."

Pauline had knelt to receive the necklace and the blessing. She remained on her knees still, while the marquise placed a hand on either of her shoulders.

"And if you are a true descendant of the family of de la Coutrée, as I believe you to be, you will rejoice completely that the vow taken by my sister and myself, long years ago, cannot be violated. That vow, Pauline, was that we should never leave our estates until the house of Bourbon once more reigned in our beloved France."

Miss Ackerman started, sprang to her feet, clasped her hands in mute and yet apparently incredulous ecstasy, while the marquise continued, her black eyes sparkling with fervor and loyalty:

"That to Louis the Nineteenth, whom——"

The girl now staggered backward—having calculated the *pas* and its cost some minutes since—and leaned, as Reeb would have rejoiced to see her favorite pupil, against the heavy armoire.

"Whom," continued the marquise, noting but by no means understanding the agitation of her young relative, "our sainted grandmama on her death-bed declared we should live to see come to this poor Château de Brimont, as came his sacred ancestors, also kings of France. Louis the Nineteenth, Pauline—he is our heir."

Miss Ackerman gasped, almost choked, and darted toward the marquise, her eyes and cheeks aflame with

the anxiety of one who watches the scales swing that hold all his future in their balance.

"Madame grandaunt, can I believe my senses? Oh, can it be true? You, too, and my Grandaunt Marie Sylvie believe in, are loyal to, the house of Bourbon? You, too, execrate the Republic, disdain the house of Bonaparte? You, too, believe that the day will come when the flag of the fleur-de-lis will wave from every house-top? Oh, you render me the happiest girl in the world! you will render my Louis the happiest man!"

"He is a royalist?" gasped the old woman feverishly.

"Royalist, royalist!" Pauline laughed wildly. "He, my lover! my fiancé! he himself is——"

For a second the young girl wavered; the blurred standard of Truth fluttered in her face, only to be thrust aside. She concluded:

"—is Bourbon d'Orléans! is himself Louis the Nineteenth. De Monplaisir is but the title by which he is sometimes known, and prefers to be. Since France denies him, why should he parade his name?" The last words were hurried out with tremendous dash and force.

The old marquise fell upon her knees and raised the cross which hung at her chatelaine to her wrinkled lips. For a second there was a deep silence, while the most loyal heart that ever beat in a woman's breast throbbed out its unworded thanksgiving to the Throne of Grace, while the turbulent pulses of the American girl kept such madcap time as made the place swim before her eyes.

"My king! my king! He comes! he comes! My child, why did you not tell me this before? My benediction! my approval!" The marquise rose and laughed. "To think that one of my family is deemed worthy of the choice of his sacred majesty! Almost an exile, you say? Write! The abbé shall write also. Bid him Godspeed to de Brimont. Debts, you told me? Youth must indeed amuse itself a little; they shall be paid!

Hold! give me that little string of beads from your throat; so, there!" replacing the corals and brilliants in their drawer and taking out a magnificent parure of diamonds and rubies, "these are the fitting jewels for her who is to be the bride of France's sovereign, my dear!" The marquise took Pauline by the hand and drew her to her side, while she reached out the other arm and pulled the bell-rope.

When Clémentine appeared, "Summon Monsieur l'Abbé, Madame Ackerman, mademoiselle and monsieur le chevalier," she said. "Bid them to have the complaisance to come to me here without delay.

"Tremble not, my child," added Pauline's great-grandaunt, for the girl was shivering with her tangle of emotions. "Rejoice, for you bring happiness beyond comparison into the lives of us old people; into the lives of some hundreds here in the domains belonging to my sister and myself."

The old marquise had no misgivings whatever in accepting the revelation just made by her young relative. She had neither reluctance nor hesitation in her belief in all that she had heard. To her, who had never seen any portrait whatever of the Duc d'Orléans; had never read a line concerning him; who had no affiliation with any members of the royalist parties, in or out of France; who, for almost fifty years, had pinned her simple faith on the dictum of a moribund grandmother and on the legend of her family's loyalty to the Bourbons since the reign of the first king of that line, Pauline's announcement seemed most natural. It would never have occurred to the dame chatelaine of de Brimont or to anyone within her radius to have questioned the identity of her great-grandniece's suitor, or to have done other than joyfully prepare to greet the young, and as yet landless, heir to a fallen throne.

To one who has waited for an ideal as long as these people had, its apparent realization admits of no skepticism. In the same manner the mar-

quise, mademoiselle and the abbé himself took the pious devotions of the Ackermans as a matter of course; it never entered into their minds to investigate their sincerity. None of them had ever encountered a Protestant in their lives; yet the fact remained that Pauline and her mother were Baptists in name, and that a serious consultation had resulted in the decision to join in the Roman services without preliminary parley, lest such might prove inimical to their scheme.

Clémentine threw open the double doors and held aside the portières; mademoiselle, the chevalier and the abbé entered, some wonder written upon their aged countenances as they beheld the marquise standing in the middle of the room, Pauline at her side, with her hands quite full of strings and coronets, brooches and aigrettes of sparkling gems.

"My beloved friends," the marquise began, and then stopped short, for Mrs. Ackerman hurried into the room in an excited way. She had, on receiving the summons, quaked with terror lest something had gone amiss, for her daughter had not taken her into her confidence regarding her latest move.

One glance reassured the promoter's facile widow; and, remembering the beautifier of the rue de la Paix, she collected her face and joined the group.

"My beloved friends," resumed the old marquise, "I have to tell you great, glorious, magnificent news. In this young girl, our beloved grandniece, Pauline de la Coutrée-Ackerman, you see the one who has been chosen by the heir of the house of Bourbon as his bride! My sister, the King of France seeks an alliance with our poor but ever faithful house! Our blood will give to our country yet another dauphin! My friends, listen! the coming of Louis the Nineteenth is at hand!"

The sweet, pitiful eyes of Marie Sylvie were lowered to meet the tender and triumphant looks of the chevalier; their hands, quite wrinkled, with blue veins knotting all the white, encountered and clasped together amid

the stiff folds of mademoiselle's pelisse. The abbé raised his hands in mute thanksgiving; the American lady took refuge in the modest contemplation of the floor.

"Oh, my beloved friends," continued the marquise, leaning one hand upon Pauline's shoulder, the other heavily upon her ebony cane, "our king comes to de Brimont, our king! our king! Grandmama was right! Let us at once go to the chapel, Monsieur l'Abbé, and offer up our thanks to the abundantly good God."

On the way the little chevalier and mademoiselle lingered in the narrow passage built in the great wall, where the portraits of the Bourbons hung in the shadows; and the little chevalier drew down Marie Sylvie's head to his shoulder and for the first time his lips were laid tremblingly, reverentially on those of his sweetheart.

All together, the marquise, mademoiselle, Mrs. Ackerman, Pauline, the chevalier and the abbé, knelt before the altar in the chapel; and, contradictory as it may seem, the *fubilate* which sang in the hearts of the Americans was precisely as earnest as that which echoed up to heaven from the guileless souls of the French.

## V

ALL was preparation at the chateau, at Brimont-Aujillac, Brimont-Taube, Taube-sur-Mer. This preparation was in a sense subdued, it is true. The only word of warning that was given out was a respectful request from the mayor of Brimont-Aujillac that, "out of regard for the—unfortunately!—prevailing government, madame la marquise would have the condescending grace to forbid the bands of music from playing on the occasion of the celebration of the coming to Languedoc of the well beloved, the heir to the—alas!—now empty throne of France; as such has been prohibited by the said prevailing government in the city of Marseilles, and a departure from the obnoxious decree might cause

serious trouble, by calling attention to the loyalty of the good people of the province."

But, although the absence of the music was held to be a great loss, even it was soon forgotten in the plans of the marquise and her retainers, pensioners, farmers and the rest.

At the chateau the royal suite, as it had always been called since his majesty, Louis the Thirteenth of blessed memory, had occupied it, when he made his journey into Languedoc in the year 1641, was thrown open, aired, swept and garnished for the coming of this, his descendant. The grand Gobelins tapestries were brushed, shaken and rehung upon the walls, where, when his majesty should lie down at night for his repose, his eyes might rest upon the edifying history of "The Golden Fleece"; the gorgeous damask curtains, all embroidered with the royal fleur-de-lis, were drawn aside from the carved and gilded bedstead, displaying the pillows beautifully dressed with the priceless lace from Brussels; the sheets marked with the royal arms were taken from their lavender; the coverlet, emblazoned with the same device; the porcelain, decorated in similar fashion—all these were brought out and placed in readiness for his majesty.

At Brimont-Aujillac the young boys and girls from the silk mills were being drilled each evening by the good sisters at the convent in the singing of a royal ode composed by the Abbé de la Toinette himself. At Brimont-Taube the good wives and good men and their sons and daughters were scouring their houses, their best clothes, polishing their silver buttons, beads and earrings, teaching one another how one should salute a king. At Taube-sur-Mer the fishwives and their men and children were hurrying at the skinning and the oil-pots and nets and casting quick glances at the sea and sky, praying to St. Martin for good weather, and being a little vexed that, after all their watching and waiting for his sail, the young king was, it seems, to come by land.

This regret the marquise herself fully shared.

"Grandmama said, 'Look ever toward the sea and you shall behold the white flag flying.' I regret, Marie Sylvie, that his majesty finds it necessary to come by the land. Grandmama, I dare say, though, did not see every detail quite correctly."

"Oh," answered Marie Sylvie, "is it not enough, then, my sister, that the king comes? Let us not be too particular whether it be ship or coach that brings him; doubtless the good God had the privilege of changing His mind."

"True," replied the marquise, with a glance at mademoiselle, who of late seemed to be tasting with little furtive sips at the delicious cup of a youth which had been retarded, but never quenched, in all these many years.

Mademoiselle, in fact, used more rouge and powder, was more coquettish in her toilets, kept monsieur le chevalier waiting for her in the salon far longer and made much more beautiful eyes for him than she had ever done before. It was all, of course, because monsieur le chevalier was now occupied, daily, hourly, in urging his suit; in imploring mademoiselle to name the time when she would become his wife: which goes to show that youth does not pre-empt all the deliriums and delights of love, but that these sometimes laugh with deepest joy on lips no longer red.

Pauline Ackerman lived these days and weeks in a whirl, from which she allowed herself no period of rest, no time to think; her veins were on fire with the fever of impatience and the terror lest something unforeseen, unimaginable, should arise to thwart her desire; but the weeks went away to join the rest of their kind and nothing untoward occurred.

It was now August, and very soon the duke would be with her. Within seven days the most important act in the drama which Miss Ackerman had so far successfully conducted would be set in motion by the arrival of her suitor.

Today she sat upon the floor in the suite which was known as the "Dauph-

in's"; for immediately after the announcement of her engagement had been made the young girl who was destined to wed a king was assigned a separate and far more magnificent suite of apartments than those she had shared with her mother; two maids and a valet had at once been appointed for her particular service; four of the finest horses, a groom, a coachman and footman had been placed at her exclusive disposal. All the few families of distinction in the neighborhood had been duly presented to her. In short, Miss Ackerman's cup might be reasonably supposed to be overflowing with honey and oil; but for all this she sat with knitted brows upon the floor in her favorite lounging attitude, the buttons missing from her peignoir, and its open front displaying the rare, long beauty of her throat. She had dismissed her maids, for to a woman in Pauline's position maids, even those who understood not the other language, are unsafe adjuncts. Mrs. Ackerman lay on the couch with the novel in her hand which she had brought with her from Paris two months ago.

"Mother," spoke Pauline in English, as she always did when these matters were under discussion between them. She stuck the handle of her pen in her mouth as she looked speculatively over at her parent.

Mrs. Ackerman gladly threw aside the novel; she had read it through four times, since there were no books at the chateau save those of religion. She looked at her daughter interrogatively.

"Suppose, after all," said Pauline, "that when Louis gets here, either he is unable to convince the old lady that she must identify and name him in the wills only as Louis, Duc de Monplaisir, or that someone, something, should turn up to floor us—eh? What then?"

"Pshaw!" retorted the mother. "Don't you worry over any such nonsensical idea as that! If I know anything at all about men and women, and I think I do"—Mrs. Ackerman spoke with a supercilious and reminiscent smile—"the duke will know quite well how to make the marquise and made-

moiselle alter the texts of their wills before he has been here many days. Don't be a fool, my dear; don't be like your father now, I beg, and begin to have compunctions just as we are on the verge of consummating about the biggest deal we'll ever get a chance at in our lives."

"I haven't any compunctions," exclaimed the girl hastily. "I'll admit, though, that I have some fears."

"Banish them, then! Nothing, and no one, can turn up, as you put it. My heavens, child, the people are as safe as if we had all been translated back before the flood. They are three of the most perfect idiots; they have no more conception of the world of today than I have of how Noah's wife made her bonnet. And neither has anyone within a hundred leagues of them. Just remember that these old parties have immured themselves here for half a century; sitting up day and night waiting and watching for 'the king to come.'" Mrs. Ackerman nearly choked between laughing and lying down. "Here, my dear, when we have been good enough to show up with the royal article, you indeed must begin to quake—your father over again. Brace up; look ahead to your fifty millions of francs and all these splendid acres of Brimont and de la Coutrée. Are you writing to the duke?"

"Yes," replied Pauline. "It's the last letter he'll have before he starts. I've been reading it over to see that I've told him everything—I think I have: that the marquise is to send the post-chaise with outriders for him to the inn to meet the arrival of the diligence; that the mayor will meet him and welcome him; also Master Tonton, the notary; Master Carolac, the bailiff; Père Mengoult, et cetera, et cetera; that at the cross the marquise and mademoiselle will await his coming; that he must be careful and keep well in mind all the etiquette of such an occasion; that he must not wear violets nor mention the name of Bonaparte; that he must conform to all the observances of religion; be haughty and yet complaisant. Oh, goodness me! he must certainly know

how to meet the situation and use it to the best possible advantage. If he doesn't—well, then, I'll step in and repair the damage, that's all." Pauline paused, drew up her knees between her clasped hands and gazed straight ahead of her.

"Mother," she said at last, "you said something or other, a minute ago, about my being like father, didn't you?"

Mrs. Ackerman nodded; she was eating nut-cakes and sipping Bordeaux.

"Sometimes, lately, I have wished that I were like him."

"How?" gasped the mother, setting down her glass.

"Dead," returned the girl drily. Then she rose, kicked the long draperies from under her feet and laughed.

"Don't be frightened, dear," she said glibly; "I am not dying just now. I am alive and bound to succeed in my undertaking."

Mrs. Ackerman kissed her.

The great day, the greatest day that the countryside had known since his majesty Louis the Thirteenth came two hundred and fifty-odd years ago, at length dawned for this little corner of Languedoc.

The state coach, all small-paneled paintings and gilt mountings, with six white horses, each ridden by a postilion in the blue livery of the marquise, had been despatched to meet his majesty at Brimont-Aujillac. A great arch of timber and boughs draped with Indian fabrics had been erected at the cross-roads at the edge of the forest of la Coutrée. The marquise herself, with mademoiselle, had set forth in the blue chariot with four black horses, while Monsieur l'Abbé and the chevalier followed in another; and twelve valets, six bearing old-fashioned arquebuses, and six having the old-time hunting horns about their bodies, over one shoulder and under the other, rode on prancing steeds. After these, who were presently joined en route by the equipages, came outriders, retainers and valets of Messieurs the Comte de Frijac, the

Prince d'Oxillac, the Baron de St. Yvonnnet; while the peasantry and fishermen, the woodchoppers, the mill-people, the sisters of Ste. Marguerite, the lay brothers of St. Vincent de Paul, children and women, youths and maids, lined all the two leagues of way from Taube-sur-Mer to the huge stone "cross of the Connétable de Bourbon," which stood at the *carrefour* in the forest, and which was to be the rendezvous for the welcome of Louis the Nineteenth by the families of de Brimont and de la Coutrée, as it had been on the occasion of the visit of his ancestor, Louis the Thirteenth.

By advice of that exquisite French etiquette which, however superficial, still hedges a young girl about with something of divinity, it was planned, as a matter of course, that Pauline, with her mama, should await the coming of her royal fiancé at the chateau, rather than go forward to meet him publicly.

Imagine a morning in August, when the sun shines brilliantly on the billowing sea, when the long curve and wind of the little River Taube, as it slips between the ripening fields, is regally purple with the thick growth of the fleur-de-lis; when the shade of the green woods is grateful here in the great hunting forest of la Coutrée. There is silence save for the tread of the horses and the crunch of the wheels. All is expectancy, eagerness, hush. The cavalcade reaches the cross of the connétable with its roughly carven inscription commemorating one of the greatest *chasses à courre* ever known.

Hark! the wind of a horn blown hither by the breeze; the answering "Halali! li! li!" of the marquise's valets; the shouts and enraptured cries of men, the tearful blessings of women; caps, aprons, kerchiefs waving in the air; bows, courtesies, and around the bend of the forest road dashes the state coach containing the Duc de Monplaisir!

The six horses are pulled up on their haunches by the postilions; Monsieur l'Abbé and monsieur le

chevalier descend from their coach assisted each by a lackey; they, in turn, assist madame la marquise and mademoiselle to alight, and all four cross the *carrefour* in procession, the marquise leading, to the side of the coach of Louis the Nineteenth, where, with a courtesy precisely such as a de la Coutrée made to Louis the Thirteenth, the marquise welcomes his sacred majesty to this loyal part of his domains.

De Monplaisir, not to be outdone in chivalrous courtesy, and perfectly master of his situation, impetuously leaps from his coach, bows with his hat in one hand, the other on his heart; seizes the hands of both the marquise and mademoiselle, kisses them with inimitable grace, expresses his profound emotion, including in this all the beholders by a courtly wave of the arm and turn of the eyes, and insists upon the marquise entering his coach and being driven at his side to the chateau.

And, then, the comte, the prince, the baron, the major, the notary, the bailiff, the chevalier, the abbé and everybody else, including many young persons of the feminine order who testify to the beauty of the king's eyes, set up a hurrah of acclaim, devotion, heartfelt welcome and enthusiasm such as had echoed right royally for Louis the Thirteenth long ago.

Ah, the condescending graciousness of his majesty, the sublime affability, the humility of the self-abasement of the handsome, graceful, beautiful young monarch! The touching modesty of his glances! He accepts the fleur-de-lis at the hand of madame la marquise, and at once places it in his buttonhole! The amiable lowliness of his demeanor as he takes from Mademoiselle de Frijac the engrossed ode to his majesty written by Monsieur l'Abbé, and instead of replacing it in its sandalwood box puts it in his left-hand breast pocket! The exalted manner in which he bows right and left to all his people! His angelic demeanor when the young wife of Gironac, the joiner, audaciously holds up

her baby at the very door of the royal coach, and he smiles and lays his hand on its head in benediction! Ah, what so beautiful as to behold such grandeur united to such simplicity!

All this is noted, and much more, as the procession winds down through Brimont-Taube to Taube-sur-Mer, the marquise and the king conversing all the while of many pleasant things, such as Pauline, the betrothal, the vow of madame la marquise and of mademoiselle, her sister; the debts of the king; the indisposition of the king ever to listen to such a matter as the payment of his debts; the deplorable state of the country; his majesty's grief over the weakness of his cause; the assurance of the marquise that the day is not far distant when his majesty will mount his throne—the which her sainted grandmama had predicted. At this interesting crisis the state coach is just passing the tall column on top of which stands the image of the Corsican.

In sympathy, doubtless, with the feelings of the marquise, the king now sweeps his handkerchief across his face, and also, with an almost imperceptible motion, lifts his hat from his head, while his fine eyes rest upon the bronze statue of Napoleon the First. Very likely this small attention is intended for the fishwives; in any event, it passes.

Then, up from the seas, climbing the hill to the chateau, with the lilt of the horns making merry, with the white flags flying from the turrets; with Pauline in her pink gown to match the taffeta of her great-grandaunts, with Mrs. Ackerman in rose damask, both on the grand terrace to meet him, the supposed heir to the house of Bourbon-d'Orléans, with the dashing grace to be expected of him under the circumstances, hands the marquise from the coach, runs up the steps to Pauline, falls upon one knee, and, kissing her hands repeatedly, gives to her the fleur-de-lis from his buttonhole.

Ah, well, what more, then, can be desired? The king arrives and soon France—unhappy, save for this little

happy space of it—France will have a queen!

The cheers, the bravas and bravos now break out afresh, and refuse to be quieted until, from the chateau whither they have retired, the monarch and his betrothed obligingly emerge and show themselves on the upper balcony.

The royal estate, as the duke and Pauline presently discovered, had several drawbacks. It was next to impossible for these two to obtain a moment alone together. Kings and intending queens did not, in the code of the marquise, run to tête-à-têtes. His majesty took his meals alone, served by the two pages who had been appointed to the office, one the son of the Comte de Frijac, the other of the Baron de St. Yvonnnet; also by the abbé, who said grace for him, and by Jules, who religiously tasted every dish before his majesty was allowed to partake of it. His *levée* and his *couchée* were attended by the abbé, the pages, the four valets; in his walks and drives six armed valets and the two pages, all mounted, accompanied him; and the plea of poverty, which Pauline had advanced as the reason for her lover's not bringing a suite with him into Languedoc, certainly no longer embarrassed the Duc de Monplaisir.

With all the fine delicacy of which such characters are capable, the marquise contrived to fill the empty purse of her royal guest; and, moreover, in a fortnight's time he had spent twenty-five thousand francs and paid all his gambling debts, except the one he owed to Reeb.

At last, however, after considerable manœuvring, the duke and Pauline arranged a half-hour together, with the aid of Mrs. Ackerman.

They were on the terrace, in full view, it is true, of the windows of the salon and of the boudoir; but in the one room were the chevalier and Marie Sylvie, while in the other Pauline's mother held the marquise in conversational leash.

"Well?" ejaculated the girl, looking into the man's eyes.

"Very excellently well! By my faith, what a head sits upon your adorable shoulders, my Pauline! The only fault I find is that I am too well guarded. How long, my dear, must this comedy last, eh?"

"Until the matter of the wills is settled," returned the girl promptly. "The whole thing will become a perfect farce, with the laugh on the other side, unless we can bring the old lady, my grandaunt, to the point of recognizing that you can't inherit as it now probably stands. Dear me, Louis, it strikes me that it is your turn now. I have installed you here as King of France. I am weary of posing. Suppose I hand over the reins to you and let you manage the affair now to its issue?"

Miss Ackerman's tone was entirely one of business; in fact, her two months of apprenticeship in such an undertaking as this had proved to be, distinctly palled upon her. Like most of her race, her enthusiasm was boundless and her staying powers small; moreover, she began to question her own love for de Monplaisir, as well as his for her.

This gentleman was about to answer Pauline's last remark, when the marquise, no longer to be restrained, even by Mrs. Ackerman's wiles, came through the low window of the *boudoir* out upon the terrace.

"Madame!" The king sprang to his feet and placed a chair for the marquise. "But I insist," he cried, as the old *grande dame* shook her head.

"I implore! Well, then, madame, since you force me, I command!" And then only did the marquise consent to sit in the presence of her sovereign.

"If your majesty will permit," she said, "I should wish to have *mademoiselle* withdraw for a time. I desire very much a private audience with your majesty on matters of moment. Your majesty shall impart it all to my grandniece later."

She smiled at Pauline, who, at a slight motion from de Monplaisir, rose, kissed the marquise's hand and went into the house.

"Your majesty," continued the mar-

quise, drawing two documents with red seals from her reticule and laying her cane down on the table, "this is my will; this is the will of my sister. Read them. Yes, I beg of you," as the king waved his hand deprecatingly and then took the papers from her.

"It is proper that your majesty should be master of their contents. This very morning, after matins, which I regretted to learn your majesty was prevented from attending by a slight indisposition"—the king bowed with a sorrowful expression—"after matins, our good abbé counseled me, and wisely, no longer to delay in acquainting your majesty officially with the facts. I am not young."

"Madame!" exclaimed de Monplaisir, in that tone of surprised remonstrance which all Frenchmen assume when a woman of no matter what age addresses this remark to them.

"No, your majesty; and, as the abbé observed, there is no reason why I should not, before I take my leave of France and of the world, have the great satisfaction of imparting to your majesty the fact that your majesty is the sole heir of my sister and myself."

"*Mon dieu*, madame! Impossible! incredible!"

"Ah, I knew that my grandniece—loyal young soul!—had not told you."

"Ah, madame, it is of other matters that my adorable Pauline has written and spoken, I assure you."

"Read, read, now, at once! I request it of your majesty as a favor."

With a shrug, as if fortunes were things not entering into royal calculations, and with the smile and air of one deferring to the whim of age, the duke appeared to examine, only in the most cursory way, the two brief papers. In reality his keen, fine eyes, his subtle, intuitive intellect grasped and took in the gist of the text in five seconds.

"Madame, it is, I repeat, impossible," he said, as he handed the papers back to the marquise. "While the poor scion of the house to which I belong reveres, honors and appreciates the splendid generosity and loyalty of both *madame la marquise* and *mademoi-*

selles, he could never, madame, accept such princely munificence—no! no!”

With an almost royal motion de Monplaisir rose, took a turn up the terrace and down again. “Madame, with my whole heart I thank and bless, but I must refuse.”

The old marquise shook her head with twinkling eyes.

“Your majesty, these”—holding up the wills—“are unalterable.”

“Madame,” the duke extended his hand, “permit me?” He took the documents from the marquise, ran his eyes over them a second time, and smiled.

“Aha! I thought, although my first glance was hasty, that I was correct. You see, madame”—he pointed to certain lines on the parchments—“fate is on my side. These vast estates of yours are left to ‘His Majesty de Bourbon-d’Orléans, Louis the Nineteenth, King of France.’ Ah, madame, France recognizes no king! The house of Bourbon-d’Orléans has less hold than any other that has reigned. There is indeed no Louis the Nineteenth whatever. I am known in law, madame, and to my most intimate friends—followers,” instantly corrected the duke, “simply as Louis, Duc de Monplaisir. So, madame, you perceive that I can never become your heir. Let us at once banish the subject, madame.”

His majesty took another little promenade of emotion, and returned to give a seemingly casual glance at the marquise.

“Your majesty shall become our heir. I shall not sleep tonight, and mademoiselle, my sister, shall not sleep tonight, until Maître Tonton is summoned from Aujillac, makes new wills under the direction of Monsieur l’Abbé, and they are signed and placed in the iron box in my apartment to remain until—the good God calls and finds me listening.”

And notwithstanding the entreaties, the prayers, the commands, even, of his majesty, the new wills were duly drawn up, sealed, signed and put away, leaving to “Louis, Duc de Mon-

plaisir,” one of the noblest and richest fortunes of France.

## VI

THE last month of summer now drew near its close; the twenty-fifth day, the feast of the Blessed St. Louis, was at hand, and if it was celebrated always with pomp and circumstance by the good people of the three villages, it was decided that the ceremonies this year, when his majesty was indeed in their midst, should eclipse anything seen or heard of at Brimont for the last two centuries.

Masses were celebrated, both in the chapel of the chateau and in the churches of Ste. Marie Madeleine at Taube-sur-Mer, St. Eustache at Brimont-Taube, St. Basile at Brimont-Aujillac, beginning at six o’clock in the morning, the last one being sung by the venerable Abbé de la Toinette; and all of these were devoutly attended by his majesty and his suite, fasting.

When, finally, de Monplaisir contrived to get a word with Miss Ackerman, as they came out from the concluding service, he said under his breath:

“*Chérie*, by my faith, to be a king is hungry work! *Mon dieu*, I have at least expiated all my sins this morning. I have never been to so much church before in my life!”

“Hush!” returned the young girl, “you’ll be heard. Well, it is all over now, and the rest of the day one has nothing to do but amuse oneself. Louis,” she added, as they paced the length of the formal flower-garden, side by side, the suite following, also the marquise, mademoiselle, Mrs. Ackerman and the little chevalier, “we have succeeded, eh?”

“Decidedly,” returned the duke. “Nothing now remains but for the marquise to quit and leave us to enjoy your rightful inheritance.”

It was high noon; there were birds singing in the thick, close-cut boughs of the box trees; there were flowers all

about, nodding out their perfumed breath; the aromatic scent of the purpling grapes came up from the vineyards; the songs of the peasants echoed in their ears as the procession of St. Louis, carrying the saint's relic up the king's highway, could be seen moving joyfully along with its banners and music, candles, children with garlands, and solemn priests. The splendor of the sunshine was over all the land, the sea and the air.

"Louis," whispered the American girl to her suitor, "are you happy?"

"My well beloved!" exclaimed the young man, while his eyes sought hers in reproach. "I am at your side; I have no other answer. Is my Pauline happy, eh?" he asked tenderly.

"What a question!" She laughed merrily. "Should not the fiancée of a Bourbon be the happiest person in the world? Ask my grandaunt!"

They were to separate at the entrance of the chateau. Miss Ackerman was still laughing when she left the duke, but if one had observed her closely there was a strangely sorrowful shadow over her face.

The marquise had arranged for a grand banquet at the chateau in the evening, and the whole of the remainder of the good St. Louis's day was entirely taken up with preparations for this entertainment which was given more especially for the purpose of formally announcing the betrothal of the king to Mademoiselle Ackerman.

The Prince d'Oxillac had, without the least qualm, advanced the fact that no king or dauphin had ever before in the records of all France stooped to an alliance with one not of royal blood, but this incontrovertible assertion was met by his majesty with all that urbanity and *esprit* for which his house had ever been noted.

"My dear prince," observed the king, "since the laws of France no longer recognize my family, my throne, my claim or my devotion to my country; since I am not even permitted to take up arms for France, it should be no matter for surprise or question that I have sought and found a bride in that

great country across the sea, which has more than once proved itself an asylum for my downfallen house. I assure you, monsieur, that I do not overstep my royal prerogatives in the choice that I have made. Should my throne ever revert to me, I am perfectly aware that the grandniece of madame la marquise will grace and honor it at my side."

The which speech met the hearty approval of all concerned and caused the prince no end of joyful congratulation from his neighbors at having been the recipient of so lengthy a favor from his majesty's own lips.

At eight o'clock the guests began to arrive, while the music stationed in the *pavillon de danse*, and also in the grand gallery, sounded out its sweetest. Thousands of candles burned in the candelabra, lackeys in their gold-laced uniforms ran hither and thither, and valets in silver and blue stood like sentinels in double rows on either side of the great staircase. Bunches of fleurs-de-lis were in the tall vases. A carpet woven in the East spread all the way from the stairs to the entrance of the *pavillon de danse*, and farther up the whole length of that splendid room, with its walls of mirrors and garlands, to the very foot of the royal dais, whereon stood two superb chairs of oak, carved with the fleur-de-lis and canopied by the white flag with its golden lilies. In these same chairs, a very long time ago, had sat Louis the Thirteenth and his queen.

Now all the great hall was lined with the families of the comte, the prince, the baron, the chevalier and messieurs of noble blood; now there were color, sparkle, flashing of gems and eyes; anticipations of youth and also of age. The music burst into a more glorious peal; the royal horn gave forth its dominant note; there was a fanfare and beat of drums as his majesty, Louis the Nineteenth, in the gorgeous uniform of the Russian regiment of which he was indeed an officer, descended the stairs.

Homage, reverence, happiness, loyalty were written upon every face as,

slowly bowing to the right and left, with smiles, the king proceeded up the hall into the crowded ballroom to the dais. There he found the marquise with her grandniece. To the young girl he returned her profound courtesy, took her hand and pressed his lips upon it, while Monsieur l'Abbé lifted his own clasped hands above them, raised Pauline to a seat beside him upon the chairs of Louis the Thirteenth, and the grand roof up yonder in the shadows reverberated with the shouts of his subjects.

Presently, when all had been presented, the ball was opened, as was etiquette, by the king leading forth his hostess in the royal quadrille, while the prince was the partner of Pauline, the comte of mademoiselle and the baron of the princess.

It was a royally beautiful sight, precisely as it might have been two hundred years ago, for all these honest loyal gentlemen and their sons wore court dresses or uniforms, all these ladies sparkled with jewels, rouge, patches, powdered hair and brocades stiff as starch, and pattered and minced up and down on red and blue and gilded heels, so high that they were frequently in danger of falling over on their noses.

The young girls, indeed, were not *poudrée*. Pauline, in a white frock, with a rope of pearls about her throat, had never looked lovelier in her life. Even now that was precisely what de Monplaisir whispered in her ear as, the formalities accomplished, his majesty found himself at liberty to dance a very unaccustomedly—to him—stately *tempo di valse* with his fiancée.

With a sigh light as a bit of down blown by the wind, Miss Ackerman brushed aside everything—"just for a little while," she explained hurriedly to herself, and abandoned her whole heart and brain to the spell of the night and the music. The music! Ah, it still possessed that refrain which seemed like the echo of loss, so sweet that it was wellnigh bitter. The lights, the homage, the success, the encircling arm of her lover—yes, yes,

this must be the bliss that is the pinnacle of happiness, the best that life can give! Her eyes met those of de Monplaisir in all the rapture of youth and fulfilment.

And yonder in that alcove where cupids are painted on the wall sat mademoiselle and the little chevalier. He has also complimented his fiancée on her beautiful appearance, and has added:

"Then, Marie Sylvie, I have your promise, also the consent of the marquise, your sister, that we shall be married on St. Leo's Day, the tenth of September?"

"Since the king has come," assented mademoiselle, with the most beautiful little pink blush imaginable flying up away beyond the round spots of rouge which Clémentine had put on her cheeks.

"Yes," cried the little chevalier, as he might, since the music was quite deafening; "thank God! the king has come!"

Which, as it happened, were precisely the words which fell at that very moment from the lips of the marquise herself. She had been into the banqueting hall and seen that everything was as it should be—the royal table set with the service and vases of matchless faience d'Orion; the golden platters and the fruit dishes; the wines and sherbets; the meats and the pâtés; the salads and cakes and confectionery; the grand *pièce montée* being a portrait in sugars of the Blessed St. Louis himself, swimming, as it were, in a sea of candied fleurs-de-lis. And so, assured that all was going well, the marquise went up into her little room in the tower, knelt down at the *prie-dieu* by the window, where the soft breeze of the August night blew in the candle flame in a streak of smoke, and thanked God from her heart for His mercy and goodness, His condescension and graciousness in so honoring her house, in so letting her aged eyes look upon His anointed before they should close forever.

As she said "Amen" and crossed herself, even before she had risen from

her knees or even taken up her cane from the floor, the sharp ears of the marquise were attracted by the sound of two voices coming from the stone seat on the little balcony under the window—two young voices, two voices that she knew very well.

And Miss Ackerman remarked:

"Louis, you make me laugh! Suppose, now, that the old marquise lives for a dozen years or so—what then, my friend?"

"God forbid!" piously ejaculated the king, "for I could not keep up for even one week longer this piece of deception—not for all the millions at stake! This playing the role of the Bourbon—bah! I require my Paris, and to be myself merely, Louis de Monplaisir, and no one else."

"You are a goose!" returned the marquise's grandniece, while the marquise herself picked up her cane, with some difficulty, it was true, pulled the bell-rope, tottered over to her large chair and sank into it, her heart beating as if it would burst the tight lacings of her magnificent bodice of pink brocade.

"Clémentine," she said, in a strange harsh voice, when the waiting-woman arrived, "here is the key. Open the iron box—so. Hand me the two parchments on top, those with the seals. Yes, now hand me the others that are beneath, so." The old woman took them in her trembling fingers and held them tightly.

"Seek Monsieur l'Abbé at once, very quietly; request him politely to come to me here. Be quick, for the love of God!"

Clémentine, greatly frightened, rushed from the room and returned almost at once with the abbé.

"My daughter, you are ill!" exclaimed the abbé.

"Monsieur, stop! before you bring religion to me, tell me—these are the old wills of my sister and myself, eh? And these are the new? For the love of God, be quick!"

"Yes, madame, you are correct." The old man examined and separated the papers carefully as he spoke.

"Put the old ones back, Clémentine, in the iron box, and bring the lights nearer—it is growing dark! So, so!" The marquise held the two documents up in the flame of the candles; she watched them ignite, curl, wither, crisp and blow away out the window in a powdery shower, doubtless upon the very heads of her grandniece and the duke.

"Hold!" she said, with a flickering smile, then a little gurgling laugh. "It is done!"

"But the king, madame, the inheritance?" cried the little abbé, in dismay.

"Hark, monsieur, you were right. I am ill! Clémentine, cut the lacing of my bodice—it does not matter. I shall not want to wear it again. Now, monsieur, you may bring in religion. Clémentine, call mademoiselle—no one else! The king, you said, monsieur? Well, I tell you, there is no king come yet to Brimont—not yet! Bring religion now, and for the love of God, be quick!"

Presently the abbé was administering the last rites; and presently mademoiselle knelt weeping at the side of her sister; presently, while still the music sounded out its sweetest and most beautiful measures, the old marquise raised herself in her chair, rapped with her cane on the floor, dragged herself over to the window and pulled aside the fluttering curtains.

"Behold!" she cried, in a voice that startled them all, while the bloom of the moonrise glorified her pinched features, while the salt of the sea smote her in the face: "a sail! a sail! the white standard with the lilies flying at the mast! Grandmama said he would come by the sea—that we must watch ever and not be weary! Look, look, messieurs and mesdames—the royal ship has seen our lights and salutes them! Bid them make ready at Aujillac, at Taube—everywhere—for the—coming—of—our—king!"

And the marquise fell back stark dead, with a smile on her face which so transfigured it that even in her youth

she had not been so beautiful. And the others, looking out, did see the silhouette of a vessel against the sky; but it faded away, down into the horizon, and never made that port.

The pupil of Reeb and the son of the *chanteuse excentrique* had both been looking at that far-off sail shimmering in the fog like some phantom; they had both been brushing the ashes of the burned wills off of their garments; they had both turned their faces toward the ballroom once more, when the music suddenly stopped, and that hush which, when it comes unannounced and sharply, speaks as an omen, struck a chill to their hearts.

The duke gave himself a shake, laughed, drew Pauline's hand within his arm and said:

"Doubtless it is supper-time, dearest, and the musicians pause to eat and drink. Let us go in and have some refreshment also."

She took back her hand, drawing a little from him so that, as she stood in the shadow, his face was clear against the brilliant lights from within. She looked at him.

Women are three parts impulse, for which they should be grateful, as should men.

"Go in, and I will follow you presently," she said, in a tone that admitted of no appeal. The Duc de Monplaisir shrugged his shoulders; he had great respect for the whims of the opposite sex, and obeyed.

Miss Ackerman watched him disappear entirely within the house. Then she stood still. It was all so quiet; the very voices of the guests were not uplifted; the wind even was lulled. Only the break of the seas on the sand went on, and all at once in this strange silence the girl realized in a flash to what a point she had brought herself.

She remembered every jot and tittle of her horrible scheme; she remembered the agile, facile manner in which she had made the plan and seen to its execution; then the drop of the land promoter's honest blood which leavened her pricked its tardy way to the

fore, and she walked to the open window of the corridor, saw the duke, beckoned him out, and, raising her hand against his ready words, said hurriedly:

"I am going away from here tomorrow. My mother will go with me. I shall not marry you. You may, and will have, the fortune—that is settled; but I want nothing to do with it. It is useless to ask me any questions or to reason with me. I shall have enough of that with my mother."

"Pauline, my beloved!" cried the young man, in astonishment.

"Please to be quiet," Miss Ackerman interrupted.

And as she spoke the stillness was broken by a sob that seemed to come concertedly from all the people indoors; and Mrs. Ackerman, a cup of sherbet in her hand, rushed out on the veranda with a shriek.

"You know it?" she said under her breath, peering at the two whom she encountered.

"But yes, madame," answered his grace, "I know it."

"And you?" turning to her daughter.

"Undoubtedly," answered the girl, "since I myself have just told the duke."

"Told him what?" the mother asked, in a bewildered fashion.

"That I shall not marry him; that I shall not touch a sou of the marquise's money; that you and I go back to Paris tomorrow." She took her mother by the arm.

"But the marquise is dead! Pauline, don't be stupid; now, at the very moment of attainment, you shall not be a fool!"

Mrs. Ackerman dropped the sherbet glass and shook her daughter with a will.

Pauline laughed; it was a bitterly hard laugh, yet the angels of the Lord might well rejoice over its mirthless ring.

"Mother," she said, freeing herself from the maternal grasp with her strong, firm young hands, "thank God

—at least I do—that I came to my senses before I knew of the marquise's death! You may stand there all next year and wring your hands—I shall not give in."

"Your father's own child, stubborn, silly!" whimpered the older woman. "Millions in your grasp and you fling them away. I thought you loved de Monplaisir!" she added rather brutally, while that gentleman walked away.

"I did, too," returned the girl, with a sigh.

"And what in heaven's name do you propose to do in Paris when you get there, after this life of luxury and ease?"

"Go to work," Miss Ackerman replied sullenly.

"I like that!" almost screamed the mother. "I like that! You who have been leading the life of a princess for months are going to work—work, with such a past to look back upon! Bah! I wish you had gone to heaven, or wherever the place is, with your father!"

Pauline regarded her mother with gloomy eyes. She heard the sobs inside and the sound of the sea yonder, and she stood there, a rudderless craft,

perhaps, and yet, after all, a gallant one.

She slipped down on her knees beside the mother that bore her and said very quietly:

"Don't talk to me about the past. It's done with. I can't talk about it nor explain why I am changed, but I am. There's something that I have got, and you'll have it with me, so don't worry or cry any more."

"What have you got?" quavered Mrs. Ackerman greedily, drying her eyes. "Did the marquise ever give you any cash sum? What is it? Speak!"

"It's the future," the girl answered, rising and straightening herself proudly, quite unheeding the frantic outburst of her parent.

And the future was indeed hers, though the memory of King Louis the Nineteenth embittered it, and though humiliation and sorrow sat with her at meat; nevertheless, that strength and sight which had come to her in the very zenith of transgression's success never forsook her, and they taught her that singular secret of living which is possessed only by those who learn renunciation.



## PERFORCE

MRS. LANE—This is the first Christmas she has ever been able to get money out of her husband.

MRS. BLAYNE—How's that?

"The court has granted her alimony."



## ALL IS VANITY

MRS. SHAW—Why do you like to give so many Christmas presents?

MRS. CRAW—It's so nice to have people wonder how you can afford it.

## THE SNOWFLAKE

YOU caught with wintry hand  
 A snowflake from the air,  
 And asked what sorrow planned  
 A star so frail and rare.

"From what white anvil fly  
 Such dreams diminutive?—  
 Like love," I heard you sigh,  
 "Too fragile-winged to live!"

Yet while you bent and gazed  
 On that cold beauty, dear,  
 The star you caught and praised,  
 See, turned into a tear!

And well love understands  
 How many and many a star  
 Life seeks with feverish hands,  
 Swings white, in being afar!

And we, through sigh and tear  
 Grow wise, and learn again  
 The love that stoops not, dear,  
 Is the love that knows not pain!

ARTHUR STRINGER.



## THE CHEERFUL GIVER

MRS. JOYCE—The cape collar I bought doesn't look well on me. I find the muff is not going to be in style this winter, and the gloves don't go well with my complexion.

MRS. BRICE—How lucky you are, my dear! What lovely Christmas presents they'll make to give your friends.



## PUT TO THE TEST

FREDDIE—Why should we all be cheerful at Christmas-time, dad?

COBWIGGER—In order that we can thank people for giving us a lot of things we don't need.

# THE QUALITY OF THEIR YOUTH

By Emery Pottle

WHEN his name was announced she had felt, all at once, as if she could not meet him—at least, just at that moment. It was scarcely a reasonable hesitation on her part; and she smiled ruefully at her sudden inner tumult. It was to her such a contradiction of her previous calm, logical state of mind toward the events of life. So strong was the present emotion that she unexpectedly gave over resisting it and left the room.

"You may say that I shall come down in a few moments," she told the maid.

The room—handsome enough in its dark, respectable way—was decidedly a room for waiting. It gave out an effect of transitoriness. One felt instinctively that it had been arranged because it had to be; that it had to be a parlor because the furniture in it was parlor furniture. The sense that nothing permanent could happen here affected Ryerson sharply as he entered. "A place designed for meeting and parting," he reflected aimlessly.

The strangeness of his errand there was impossible to get out of his mind. It kept recurring to him in rather an irritating way. For the last month he had been going over his approaching meeting with Miss Stanlaw, looking at it in all its possible lights, trying to establish it on the basis of a duty that, whatever it might hold of awkwardness to them both, had yet to be done decently. Today he felt quite equal to his task. But his going over of things had not been done without dredging up the past to its minutest pebble. When he had set foot once more in New York after an absence of twelve years—

twelve grim, exciting, interesting years—and had written the note to Miss Stanlaw telling her that he would call on the following day with a message the importance of which was exceeded only by its sadness, he had fallen into a state as near to nervousness as any that he had ever had. But this had passed. Ryerson, moving about the dark, respectable parlor, with its dignified and somewhat marred mahogany, felt at the moment, had he confessed it candidly, a strong sense of curiosity.

"After all, it's absurd," he reflected, "ridiculously absurd, when you come to think of it, that it should be I who must tell her. As if there weren't men enough, chances enough in the world for it to have happened to someone else! There seems to be a kind of law—a law of deadly practicality—working among people to level every situation to a basis of hard fact. And the sardonic humor of it is only exceeded by its giggling tragedy, I'm inclined to think. How is she taking it, I wonder? Lord, how I hate to have to see her hide her hurt before me—for she'll do that. She's plucky. She must be grieving terribly for him. Oh, it's a mess! And to think that once— Isn't it hell?"

He added grimly: "I've known, in a vague sort of way, that I'd of course meet her again some time, but heaven knows I never guessed it would be like this, in a boarding-house parlor, with all this I have to tell her. I've often wondered how people like—us—would meet after years of separation. Queer."

It was, as Ryerson put it, *queer*—this meeting with Alice Stanlaw after twelve years. He had left her with-

out anger toward her, indeed, without great bitterness of spirit, but with an ugly disappointment, a sorry sense that he was giving up the best of life. And yet, as matters stood between them, it seemed the only thing to do. She had then been engaged to him for two years. And in these two years it seemed to Ryerson they had run the scale, major and minor, of every possible mood—moods they constantly misconstrued, and, on the inevitable young analysis of them, made out to be growing foothills of separation. At last there came a time when Miss Stanlaw stood at the threshold of a certain grim truth in Ryerson's life. She had listened to the rumors of what the chamber held—and she weakly refused to enter and know all. And Ryerson, too harassed and too impatient to bear with her gently, chose to be blind to her misgivings, her fears, her cowardice. So it happened that a beautiful relation—it was that, after all—was calmly crushed out. And so confident was the quality of their youth that they went on their ways, if not rejoicing, surely not apparently cast down.

After the final breaking off of their ties—for it came to that—he had heard nothing of her save that a man he met in London had told him she was to marry Aiken. And that had been a matter of three years ago, he remembered vividly. Remembered vividly because down in his heart Ryerson still loved Miss Stanlaw, and had come, at that time, to the point of confessing it anew to himself. He had had, even then, in his pocket a letter to Alice asking her if it wasn't true that they had made a bad mistake; if the wearing little differences of youth which had so overshadowed the real thing between them hadn't been at last lived down by them both; and asking her if he might not come back. There was nothing to do but tear up the letter, of course. A month later he went to South Africa with the man who had told him of her marriage.

Somewhere up in a miserable, God-forsaken, African hole, months afterward, he had come on Aiken dying in

a native hut. And since he was the only Christian within a hundred miles, and since the man was dying, Ryerson stayed there with him to the end: stayed there, cared for him, took his last confessions, listened to his feverish ravings, held his hand until it was all over. It was a wretched business for Ryerson.

The newspapers had published garbled telegraphic reports of Aiken's death in South Africa, though Ryerson's name had not appeared in them. Ryerson had, on reaching Cape Town again, cabled the facts of it briefly to Aiken's lawyers and to Miss Stanlaw—he wondered as he did it what she was to think when she saw his name signed to the message. And then he had sailed directly for England and America. Now he had to tell her about it.

She stood for a moment in the doorway, her eyes keenly searching him, wondering why he had come, what he had to tell. In the briefest possible time she made out the visible changes in him—the close-cropped black hair grayed almost to white, the youthfulness of his shortish figure settled into hard, muscular, lean lines, the face, what she could see of it, deeply tanned and seemingly molded anew into a stern alertness, an uncompromising dignity toward the ways of living. She scarcely knew what she had expected, what she had hoped to find in Ryerson; but she felt vaguely that she was going, somehow, to reconstruct her idea of him. She had, too, a brief realization that the quality of his youth had gone out of him. The absurdity of meeting him in this alien boarding-house parlor struck her as keenly as it had Ryerson.

So it happened that she came forward with the suggestion of an amused smile about her lips and the words, "It is odd that it should happen here, isn't it?"

Ryerson turned quickly from an absent contemplation of a chilly ornament with dangling prisms. He took her hand frankly, with a rush of pleasure at seeing her again.

"That is what I was thinking as I waited," he said, with a grave smile.

They stood for an instant, quite without awkwardness, looking at each other intently—Miss Stanlaw unexpectedly alive to the satisfaction of knowing he had understood her meaning in her first words. She motioned him to a chair.

"You always understood, you know," she continued, a little uncertainly.

"I always wanted to," he answered evenly.

"I'm staying here," she went on rather nervously, "only until my house is ready for me. There are repairs——"

Ryerson nodded. Against his will he could not keep the personal side of her out of his head. "You're changed," he said abruptly. They were both aware of the precarious ground their talk was leading them to.

"Oh, yes. At the risk of triteness I have the same to say of you. *You* are changed, Henry."

"It is as well," he replied briefly, his mind at work rapidly to apprehend a something about her that was new to him, a something that constantly eluded him.

Miss Stanlaw gave him the clue the next instant, with a quick intuition of his uncertainty.

"We have both lost it, you know; I saw it at once in you. Youth, the quality of our youth."

"I suppose you are right," Ryerson answered reflectively. "It is a pity to lose it," he finished conventionally.

She laughed. "Are you convinced of the pity of it, really?"

"No," he said shortly. "No—I'm not. Are you?"

She did not answer his question. After a silence she said quietly: "You have something to tell me. I am quite ready—anxious to hear it. Don't be afraid to tell it all."

Ryerson glanced sharply at her with his shrewd gray eyes. She met his gaze calmly.

"I want to know everything," she repeated, without emotion.

He bowed gravely. "I am sorry to have to bear such news to you, Alice—sorrier than you can think. I'm sorry, too, that"—he hesitated—"it had to be I who——"

"Yes, I know," she said hurriedly. "It is hard for us both."

"It was one of the inscrutable chances that brought Aiken and me together, out there, in that hopeless place," Ryerson went on soberly. "It seems a sort of travesty on——"

"If you don't mind—" she put in beseechingly.

"I beg your pardon, I forgot your deep anxiety," Ryerson said, with a sharp realization of the attitude he was to assume toward her.

When he spoke again—Miss Stanlaw sat without impatience, her eyes on him questioningly, waiting to hear—it was in the contained, quiet voice of a man accustomed to the exigencies of his world.

"You, of course, got my cable message? And you saw the newspaper accounts of his—of it?"

She assented. "Yes—I saw them. It was strange to find your name on the message—and yet— Well, I have grown used to strange things, I think."

It was odd, thought Ryerson incongruously, that the story he had to tell her kept slipping so from their grasp, kept being overshadowed by their present unusual personal relation. He pulled his mind back to the issue—the strange issue that had brought them together after twelve years.

"I may as well begin back a bit," he continued. "I went to South Africa, with a man I know, to hunt and generally to look about the country. Several times we heard from the natives that a white man was traveling through the country ahead of us—it was a rotten kind of country, too, I thought—traveling alone, save for his native guides. And one day—we'd had a horrible pull of it and were about knocked out with fatigue—we came to a nasty heathen settlement about dusk—not a Christian face in the place. Our guides made talk with some of the head people and got them

to let us stay overnight in the village. After they had given us some food they made us understand that there was something queer in a hut nearby. And finally we went over there. It was Aiken. He was frightfully ill, and his guides had deserted and left him there sick."

Ryerson glanced at Miss Stanlaw compassionately. Her eyes were fixed intently on the ornament with the six dangling prisms.

"Did he know *you*?" she asked abruptly.

"Not at once. He was in a sort of stupor. Afterward—yes."

"And you?"

"I should hardly have known him for the man I knew here; he—he was awfully pulled down. He recognized me and told me who he was."

"Strange—you two—out there," Miss Stanlaw said absently.

It was the old note. Ryerson accepted it with a nod.

"My man went on farther the next day. Of course, I stayed on with— with Aiken. He— I could do very little for him beyond giving him the simple medicines I happened to have. They were a relief in a way, but only temporary. It was a fever he had—one peculiar to the country. He couldn't withstand it—too worn out with lack of decent food and care. A week later he died—there in that hole. We buried him at sunset one night. It was all that could be done. I tried to remember a bit of the Burial Office, but I didn't make much out of it. It was under a little tree—the grave."

Ryerson paused. The worst of it was coming.

Miss Stanlaw's voice was conventionally kind. "I am very, very grateful to you for this, all this you did for him, as grateful as he himself must have been."

"No, no. It was nothing but common decency on my part."

"You were very good. Tell me, did he know he was dying?" She spoke mechanically; her mind was running rapidly over all the possible rea-

sons for Ryerson's coming. It had been so long since she had felt she really knew him that she had to take him now as practically a new quantity whose value was to be found. Surely it was not in Ryerson's heart to make capital out of the present situation? She put that thought away as unworthy. But *why, why*, she asked herself impatiently.

"Yes—he knew."

Miss Stanlaw was silent, sitting with her hands folded quietly in her lap, her eyes on him curiously.

Ryerson, after the slightest pause, his brows drawn close together, but in his voice a firm, compassionate note, went on:

"There was nothing terrible about it, Alice—except, of course, his suffering. We had no opiates to lessen his pain. But he was mighty brave. Splendid about it all. The night before he died he talked to me a long time—about you; very quietly, but his heart was in what he said. He asked me to come back here and tell you what he could not write, to tell you that he loved you— Did you speak?"

"No," she murmured. "Go on."

"It was a great grief to him to leave you—I sha'n't forget the way he said that. But he was glad that you could not be there with him because of the anguish it would be to you—glad, even though missing you as he did. And he said that where he was going, wherever it might be, he would wait for you to come to him. His love for you had been the best thing that had ever come to him, the finest thing, even though it had been so late in his life. He spoke several times of that—how wonderful you were to him, how ill he deserved it all. He wanted more than anything to see you just once more, he repeated constantly. You know when a man lies so close to death he must say what is in his heart. And just before he went off into unconsciousness again he looked up and smiled and said, 'Good night, Alice, good night and good-bye.'"

Ryerson stopped and let his eyes meet hers fully and serenely.

"Thank you," she said lifelessly, for she had to speak; "thank you. You are good to tell me this."

Her heart was beating furiously. Gradually in the course of his last words it had begun to dawn on her that she had determined the unknown quantity; that she was face to face with something splendid, something she *knew* for the realest thing of her life; that Ryerson, at the moment, had touched the highest point of fineness of soul. It made no difference what her love had been for him once; in the illuminating flash of this recognition of his greatness Miss Stanlaw saw clearly that she loved him now, overwhelmingly, as if it were the best love of her life.

Her face in the gloom of her black dress and the dusk of the shuttered room was dead white; her eyes sought restlessly every object in the room.

"And he asked me to give you this," Ryerson added gently, drawing from his pocket a little gold ring.

She took it and let it lie in the palm of her thin hand.

"He sent me this," she repeated dully. Her eyes fastened on it curiously. It almost seemed to Ryerson that her lips tightened contemptuously; it was the deceptive light of the room, he thought, that made the strange effect.

"It is terrible for you," Ryerson said, "his dying so alone out there with no one about—terrible."

Miss Stanlaw still stared at the ring lying in the palm of her thin, blue-veined hand.

"Yes," she answered, indifferent to his sympathy.

There was a quick tension in the lines of her face that seemed to sharpen and harden it. The little gold ring fell from her hand to the floor. Ryerson stooped to pick it up.

"It's of no consequence," she said coldly. "The ring is not mine."

Ryerson shut his teeth with a sharp click and a swift intake of breath.

"But the initials?" he said at last desperately. "A. S.?"

"It is not my ring." Her voice was cool and hard. "I never saw it before."

Ryerson sat with suddenly loosened muscles and bent head.

"I did not know—I thought—the initials," he brought out haltingly. He was fiercely conscious of his desire to take her in his arms, to shield her. She was so tremendously alone.

Miss Stanlaw looked him full in the face with fearless eyes. A shrewder observer than the man before her might have read in her gaze a suffering more for him than for herself—a maternal suffering, perhaps. The instant was surcharged with unsaid things.

She spoke with great gentleness later.

"I do not blame you, Henry. But now—it must be the truth between us, mustn't it? *The truth.*"

"Great God!" he broke out helplessly.

She turned away that he might not see the sudden suffusion of her eyes with tears.

"I never dreamed that—that the ring——"

"That the ring was not mine," she finished. "I know. But the rest—the message? It was not true?"

Ryerson got control of himself somehow, but he could not speak.

"I knew," she said pityingly, "I knew it was not—true."

He rose and strode miserably up and down the room, avoiding the sight of her. So he missed the luminous quality of her face at that moment. His own struggle was keen; his hands clenched in the strain of it. Out of the wretchedness of their situation Ryerson saw but one thing clearly: he loved her—loved her not as he had loved her once, but newly, wonderfully, unselfishly.

"What can I do?" he kept repeating to himself.

"I shall not ask you to tell me what happened out there." Miss Stanlaw spoke very gently. "I do not want to know. I do know—enough." There was a note of relief in her voice that even Ryerson in his excitement could not fail to mark.

He stood still before her, questioningly. "Alice?"

"It is due you to know all of it now,"

Miss Stanlaw said, rising wearily. "There was a letter. I'll bring it."

Ryerson sat stiffly by the window staring into the street until she returned. Things had got beyond him now; all he could do, it seemed, was to await such issue as might be.

"Read it," Miss Stanlaw said briefly.

Standing there by the window, his face rigid and drawn, Ryerson read the letter. Aiken had written it just before he had set out from Cape Town for his trip into the upper country. It was a cruel letter, sharply, distinctly cruel with the subtle quality of brutality that Ryerson had always known as part of Aiken. On its single neatly penned page Aiken had finally and insolently severed himself forever from his engagement to Miss Stanlaw.

Ryerson finished it, laid it carefully down on a table, without a word. Miss Stanlaw waited. At last he raised his head and spoke with a certain grave humility.

"There is nothing to say, Alice. You know—you must know all I have to offer in extenuation. I lied to save you. I did not know of this letter, of course. You will not ask me, *must not*, what took place out there between us. I can't tell you. There—are things a man may not say."

"I understand, Henry, fully and utterly."

"Thank you," said he.

There were tears in her eyes. "Did you think I could not bear the truth?" she said, with a quiver of her lips. "Can't you see I have changed? No, you couldn't know. I used to be so afraid of the truth when—years ago, you know. I never wanted to hear it. Now it's different; I want to know it, to weigh it, to read, to feel it—the truth of everything."

"And the truth shall make you free," Ryerson quoted half-consciously.

Miss Stanlaw flushed, but her voice retained its firm, assured quality.

"Yes—shall make you free."

For an instant there flickered across Ryerson's vision the picture of a yellowed, emaciated face distorted with the agony of death, a face whereon were

weak lines of triumph, of relief, of cruel pleasure after a confession had left the lips. And again the picture of a rude grave—alone somewhere in Africa.

He sighed. Her way to freedom had been hard, he thought.

"Free for what?" he found himself saying.

She did not answer.

"I'd have given my life rather than have to bring the truth to you," he went on gravely. "I wanted to spare you. I lied deliberately. I—it seemed the only thing to do."

"You were right—on the face of it—to—lie," she answered. "It is what I would have wished you to do twelve years ago, if his letter had not come. You knew that?"

"Yes," he said quietly, "I knew that. I knew how you hated the dreadful truth of things that will come sometimes."

"You were kind to remember and—spare."

Ryerson shook his head. "I have owed you much."

"No, no," she said, "it is I who—" She broke off abruptly.

"You don't understand—you can't," she continued, in a low voice. "Since it had come to what it has between us, I had to tell the truth of it to you—spare *you*."

Ryerson leaned forward a little breathlessly.

"I did not love him. I do not now. I do not know why I ever became engaged to him—unless it was because I was so alone—and it's true that I'm getting to be old, an old woman. He offered me—but you know all this. Somehow I seemed to have come to that point in a woman's life where she accepts marriage more to prove she can be married if she wants to than for anything else. And I thought it didn't matter much what state of mind you went into it with; that with patience and tact and a polite surrender of some ideals that I had begun to think didn't really count in the long run, one could get on very decently and respectably. Do you understand?"

Ryerson nodded. "I think so."

"So I became engaged to Mr. Aiken—I don't know why he wanted me. But I'd not reckoned on—the change years can make. I thought—I don't quite know what I thought; I'd reasoned as I had reasoned long ago, and I suddenly found out something was wrong in all my theories, after all. Then he became impatient over my delays and—well, he went to Africa." She added suddenly, "He was not your father?"

"No."

"He hated you?"

Ryerson bowed. "Perhaps."

"Why?"

Ryerson hesitated for an instant. "You refused once to hear the truth of a story I had to tell," he answered quietly, "the story that seemed terribly to my discredit. It was not all so. At the time of it it seemed to me necessary to shield a man whom I——"

"Was it Mr. Aiken?"

"Yes. He hated me for knowing what I knew, even though I kept silence."

"I was so blind," she said simply. Then suddenly, in the voice he had known so well years ago, a voice with a queer little girlish inflection of pity, "Oh, it *was* hard for you."

Ryerson stretched out his hand and laid it for an instant on hers.

"Your truth has made me free," he said. "And always it has been *you* for me. And there—my God! I wanted so, above everything, to spare you, to make it right for you if I could, at any cost. Oh, you don't know what it's been for me these last years. I don't know what it's been for you, either. But with me—why, the day I heard of your engagement to Aiken I had in my pocket a letter to you asking——"

She put out her hand protestingly. "Henry—not—not today. I——"

Ryerson flushed hotly. "I beg your pardon; I'm forgetting you in my own selfish side of it. I couldn't expect——"

Miss Stanlaw smiled. "Can't you see? It's all changed for us now. We have so changed, it is as if we were new people."

"Alice!" His voice shook with emotion.

She continued to smile vaguely, her eyes looking into some dim, solemn path of the future.

"The truth shall make us free," she murmured. Then, "New people, Henry. Can't you see that I must first know the truth—*want* to know it—the truth in your life that I refused to face once—years ago? All that happened——" She turned to him with a look of deep tenderness. "Oh—oh, it has been so hard for you," she repeated.

"I will wait," Ryerson said, his face, too, touched with a smile, vague, content, "wait for the day of the whole truth and the whole freedom. I know you are not ready for it today. It hasn't come yet."

He bent, and taking both her hands in his, kissed them.

"This is only a room for meeting and parting," Miss Stanlaw said whimsically.

Ryerson laughed. She had used his own words.

"Nothing could happen here but meeting and parting with——"

"The dead," she added solemnly.

When he had gone she stood very still, a slim, dark figure in the dusk of the great, alien, respectable parlor of the boarding-house. She stood thus for a long time, then going to the chair where Ryerson had sat she stooped and kissed the place against which his head had rested.

"My dear, oh, my dear," she whispered; "free!"

"HAS Miss Binkell a telltale face?"  
"Well, it isn't easy to read between the lines."

Jan., 1905

## WHAT NEED HAVE I?

WHAT need have I, sweetheart, to write  
 A missive long in phrases trite?  
 No written words can tell the half  
 That Love's own wireless telegraph  
 Has flashed with meaning clear as light.

It matters not what I indite  
 Because you know the story quite;  
 To make a tender paragraph  
 What need have I?

But, oh, dear love, the stars are bright  
 Above a bridal world tonight;  
 At wintry fate I gaily laugh,  
 With love my stay and hope my staff,  
 And you my heart's own dear delight  
 What need have I?

JENNIE BETTS HARTSWICK.



## THE LOGICAL INFERENCE

MR. KIDDER looked up from the evening paper upon which he had been intent.

"I see, my dear," he said sorrowfully, "that Christmas is again coming."

"What else can you expect this time of year?" queried Mrs. Kidder, unshocked by the news.

"Still," said Mr. Kidder argumentatively, "it is a distressing and harrowing fact which no reputable newspaper should thrust upon a man's, especially a family man's, attention. I think I shall have to change my paper. I can't stand for such 'yellowness.'"

"Why, does the paper announce it?" asked Mrs. Kidder, with some surprise.

"Well, not in so many words," replied Mr. Kidder, carefully adhering to the exact facts; "but it is the deduction from what it does say which no logical mind can resist, especially that of the husband of a wife."

"Why, what does it say?" asked Mrs. Kidder, stopping her darning in her curiosity.

"It says," replied Mr. Kidder, solemnly consulting the article to make sure he was correct, "that two women were injured and several fainted in the crush at Seller & Doomore's necktie sale this morning."

# THE SATTERLEES

By Rupert Hughes

THE man blamed the mistress; the maid blamed the master. And then they went at it hammer and tongs in senile rage.

Mr. Jaynes, the valet, was so ancient and decrepit an heirloom that Satterlee helped him more than he was helped by him. Mrs. Owens, technically known as a maid, was so portly and so tyrannical that Satterlee's wife dared neither to ask much service of her nor to discharge her. But though these two personal servants terrorized their employers, they loved them dearly and held many a wake over the estrangement between the kindest master and the best mistress in the world. Almost every day Owens and Jaynes, meeting at dinner in the servants' hall, neglected their meat for their mourning. And after weeping luxuriously for awhile they invariably fell by the ears over the placing of the blame for the trouble.

But the Satterlees, who were the cause of so many quarrels, never quarreled. That was the worst of it. When two that should be lovers do not wrangle at times something is desperately wrong somewhere.

Now the Satterlees had been lifelong sweethearts before their marriage. They had seemed, indeed, foredoomed to marry. As very babes they had made love to each other across their perambulators. As boy and girl they had romped and quarreled in boon comradery. As boy and girl they had written fervent letters and sent surreptitious presents to each other from their boarding-schools; and when she was at Smith and he at Yale it was she of all others he had brought for

his well-chaperoned contribution to the beauties of the Junior Prom. In their vacations they had almost won many a championship at doubles in tennis; they had golfed it sentimentally over links that seemed never too long or too full of hazards; they had cantered through the Park and through Lenox, and had swum far out in the sea at Narragansett, and beau'd and belle'd at the Sherry cotillions in town.

There had been many a "spat" to give zest to a kiss-and-make-up. They had both been fickle and flirtatious often enough, but each had soon come back to the other as the only perfect comrade. To him, Margery was always the "jolly good fellow." To her, Dick was always "a love of a lad."

And so they were finally married. And their honeymoon did not wane at all for three blessed years.

Then a stress of business, a widened vista of speculation, a fierce hunger for great wealth absorbed him. His ambitions overtopped his love, and, without knowing it, he became more and more the man of affairs and less and less the devotee. This stung her pride, and she made no secret of it.

The days had gone when a servant passing—or perhaps lingering—in the halls could hear through the doors of their room the bitter wrath of their disputes. Worse days were come, when they quarreled no more, but lived apart, under the same roof, yet leagues removed; she in her rooms, he in his.

The world knew nothing of this estrangement, for both were too well-bred to take the public into their confidence. They were always mutually

courteous and hollowly happy together. They entertained frequently at home; indeed, they looked almost with terror on the thought of dining *à deux*—the ghosts would rise when they were alone in the dim candle-light of the dining-room, with the servants slipping stealthily about. So they welcomed any diversion at home, or went forth to seek it at the opera, the play, the Horse Show, yachting cruise, slumming party—anything that brought a crowd.

In time their hearts were so disciplined that even in the privacy of their home the mask of the happy pair was worn. As a second nature they feigned a cordiality that had long ceased to be spontaneous, and they played their roles with as much labor over minute detail as any character actor could spend. And all this irksome and belittling hypocrisy was entirely for the benefit of the servants. These servants! They are the masters of the household, the guests highest regarded! They are assumed to know nothing. They are known to know everything.

Satterlee, man-like, had not been long in deciding that, since he had such ill-treatment at home, he must find consolation outside his own garden-close. Man-like, he justified many a flirtation that was no secret either to the whole town or to Mrs. Satterlee. And this gave her tortured pride the *coup de grâce*.

Now, after two years of this sullen widowhood, Mrs. Satterlee began to rebel. She was a Southerner by descent, and her heart needed warmth. If her home was chill and empty, there were lovers a-plenty gathered round her by her beauty and her character, and they all held arms wide and hearts flaming like a Yule fire.

Long and hard was the battle of her pride against unfaith, even in the least thought, to the empty name of wedlock; but longer and harder was the demand of the woman in her for sympathy, for love-declarations, for caresses.

She was slipping her moorings un-

consciously, and she would soon be drifting toward the very shoals that had wrecked the life of many another woman she remembered as a former friend, through whose name on her visiting-list a line had been drawn like a fatal arrow.

She began to take a deep and lively interest in Dugald MacGowan, a braw courtier, who had been forgiven many an escapade because of his birth and his beauty, though the same excuses had not availed the women he had haled along the primrose path.

MacGowan was a magnetic fellow whom his fellow-clubmen, as well as all womankind, could not help liking mightily. There was the blood of a Bobbie Burns in his Scottish veins, and though he loved often and briefly, each flame was fierce while it lasted, and he firmly believed that each new passion was the first true passion and that it was undying.

Mrs. Satterlee swam into his ken like a lonely moon, quite dimming the little star that had inspired his latest vespers. Like an obedient tide he turned toward Mrs. Satterlee and followed her. She learned to like him better and better and to receive him more and more. Their friendship had not yet caught the hungry, roving eye of Mrs. Grundy, when Christmas week came round.

On the night before Christmas Eve MacGowan had taken her to the opera and sat in the Satterlee box. As they rode home, after a supper at the Astoria, his speech grew tenderer and tenderer. When they reached her house he tarried in the hall a moment. His fervent talk interested her mysteriously. She found herself listening in a sort of fascination to the words he breathed close to her cheek. Emboldened by her mood, he bent closer to kiss her. She just managed to dodge his lips. Then she woke to the situation with a shock of horror and fairly drove him from the house on the instant. She ran swiftly up the stairway and shook her sleepy maid awake, upbraided the slowness of her disrobing, and dismissed her brusquely.

Then Mrs. Satterlee, *solus*, hugged her brocaded bathrobe around her and shook a nimbus of hair down about her shoulders. Shivering as with a chill, she paced the room in wild excitement and self-contempt. Now she regretted her ungentleness with MacGowan; now she reproached herself bitterly for his presumption. At length she turned out the lights, and going to a window looped the thick curtain back that she might look out at the moon. Glancing down, she saw her husband coming along the deserted street just a little unsteadily. The sight of him drifting home alone from revels in which she had not companioned him was another burden upon her conscience. Suddenly she blamed herself for the past, the present, the evident future—everything. She fled away from the window and buried herself under her down quilts. She spent a restless night and was wakened early by the light that came through the window she had left uncurtained. Then the whim to go down and breakfast with her husband came to her and delighted her. She rang for Owens, refused to take her chocolate in bed as usual, had her toilet made particularly fetching and glided into the breakfast-room with reconciliation beaming in her eyes.

It was the first time she had appeared at his breakfast in three years. He was astounded. Before he thought he had exclaimed: "Not really!" in a tone in which a sneering sarcasm was disagreeable and unintentional. His mental and physical condition was partly to blame. After the riotous champagning of the evening before, the cool night air had sent him home in a penitent mood. When a man is penitent he is gruff. And Mrs. Satterlee, hurt to the quick, sank into the chair the butler placed for her.

"Not really!"—an odious phrase at best, but as a greeting to a tender approach like hers!—she vowed she would rather die than make another sortie from her castle of aloofness.

As Satterlee read the stock reports

he shot a glance across the headlines at his wife. When his eyes fell back to the paper he found himself reading into all the columns: "How beautiful she is!—my wife! How radiant she is!—my wife!" Then he rose hurriedly and with a curt "Good-bye," was rushing away.

But Mrs. Satterlee had just strength of heart enough for one more effort at reconciliation. She murmured rather dolefully:

"Tonight is Christmas Eve. I presume you will be going out?"

He had a certain engagement, but he said embarrassedly:

"Er—no—nothing special. Would you like to go to the theatre?"

She had promised MacGowan, before he had attempted to kiss her, that she would be at home; but, with morning-after repentance, she seized at the straw of rescue from herself, and said:

"Thank you, Dugald—I mean Dick—yes, for heaven's sake, let's go somewhere."

"I'll telephone for a box," he said, and was gone.

For three Christmases the Satterlees had given each other lavish gifts—largely for the benefit of the servants and the friends. Satterlee had had the title deeds to a white-stone house renting at five thousand a year transferred to his wife for this Christmas, and had ordered a huge basket of Russian violets sent her from Small's. But as he rode home a passing memory of his boyhood wooing struck him, and he stopped at Tiffany's and bought a little plain gold ring.

At the dinner table that night the Satterlees were both ill at ease. The mysterious *rapproch* of the Christmas season was on them, mellowing their hearts toward each other. But three years of formality had drifted between them, and their estranged souls could not quite find each other through the fog.

The little ring in a box was delivered while they were at dinner, and Satterlee, in boyish confusion, shoved the package across the table to his wife and said:

"Here's something that may surprise you. Don't open it till tomorrow."

On their way to the theatre they could find nothing to chat about save commonplaces. The play proved to be a sentimental comedy full of a sweet foolishness. But it blended into their mood.

When the curtain fell and Satterlee laid his wife's ermine across her shoulders he gave them a moment's pressure. And, once they were in the gloom of their carriage and their hands had met accidentally, they clung together, each more afraid to let go than to cling.

Satterlee proposed a supper at the Savoy, but Mrs. Satterlee managed to say, with the timidity of a fluttering debutante:

"There's some cold grouse and—and some—warm wine at home. Wouldn't you rather eat it there—since it's Christmas Eve—you know?"

He squeezed her hand hard for answer, and when they reached the house and went up the stairway he put his arm about her waist—just to help her. He even followed her into her room, where he had not gone for years, and took her wrap himself. When he lifted it away the very beauty of her hair and the sweet nape of her neck overmastered him; he actually whirled her around and kissed her before he knew what he was doing. He apologized, also, before he knew what he was doing—apologized for his apology, and then made his escape with:

"I'll get a—a cigar."

He was so long mustering courage to come back that when he returned he found the supper spread on a little table and his wife in a Japanese kimono and bedroom slippers. She told the servants they need not stay and serve the supper. Old Mrs. Owens was glad of that, because she had seen the kiss and could hardly wait to tell Jaynes.

And now that they were alone the Satterlees gazed at each other across the little table with something of the old-time love in their eyes and hearts; or if not the old love, at least a memory of it, a need for it, a longing love of the

old love. But between them stood the mist of those three barren years, a wall like Pyramus and Thisbe's.

After a timorous silence Satterlee said, just to make talk:

"Do you know what touched me most in that play?"

"What was it—Dick?"

"That silly old couple that were so spoony for all their gray hair." And he sighed. "Such a marriage is no failure."

Then she could not refrain from reaching an appealing hand across the table and saying pleadingly: "Is our marriage a failure?"

He took her hand, lifted it to his lips, and, being an American, only answered her question with another: "Well, what do you think—Margery?"

A long silence before she could say, ever so feebly: "We didn't think so once." Then briskly, "Do you remember how——?"

And then there was an antistrophe of "Do you remember?" and "Have you forgotten?" till they were far away from their present life and back in their honeymoon days. Even beyond that they journeyed, hand in hand, retraversing the flood of years till they were boy and girl again. They were laughing youthfully now, and he was exclaiming:

"Ah, those were the times when Christmas was Christmas. Do you remember that house party we went to, where we all hung up our stockings? If we were only back there!"

"Why can't we—no, it would be too childish!"

"Why can't we what?—hang up our stockings tonight?"

"I was going to suggest it, but it's too foolish."

"Nothing is foolish that has a sentiment in it," he exclaimed impetuously. "You shall hang up yours—mine are only half stockings now—unless I use my golf-plaids. But you shall hang up a pair of yours—and that right now!"

Giggling like a girl she rose to bring them. As his eyes followed her he saw on a table the little box he had given her that morning. In a flash he seized

it and broke it open. Then, with a sudden access of self-consciousness, he stood awkwardly holding out the ring while she returned, smiling through beatific tears.

A quick light of comprehension broke over her face as she approached him. Clumsily but gently he took her hand and slipped the little ring on her finger.

"It is a new wedding ring," he said. And on the very moment the big

bells of the nearby cathedral leaped into chime.

And just outside in the hall Jaynes popped a kiss on Owens's nose and snickered: "A Merry Christmas to ye, Mrs. Owens!"

"And the same to you," giggled Mrs. Owens, in idiotic bliss.

"And many of them," retorted Mr. Jaynes, with an originality that delighted him in his second childhood.



## THE TRUST'S NOËL

GO rest you, merry gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay,  
The price of all and sundry  
We've raised this Christmas Day.



## CHRISTMAS PROVERBS

THE kissed girl does not fear the mistletoe.

Too many cooks drink the brandy that should have gone into the mince pie.  
One-half the world doesn't know how the other half manages to make so many expensive Christmas presents.

A girl under the mistletoe is worth two in the conservatory.

Eat, drink and be merry, for at New Year the bills come in.

J. J. O'CONNELL.



## A PIOUS MOTIVE

THE BISHOP—I was very glad indeed, Mr. Muchmore, to see you in church this beautiful Christmas morning.

MUCHMORE (*father of a family*)—Oh, I'd have gone anywhere to escape the kids' racket for awhile.

## BALLAD OF THE KING'S CHRISTMAS

By Zona Gale

THE king's palace was wonderful with green.  
 The holly hung on many a paneled wall;  
 Dark wreaths and boughs were made to loop and lean  
 From dome to wainscot of the pillared hall;  
 Great fires were laid, soft strings were tuned, and all  
 The court made happy holiday to know  
 That the young king would lead the Christmas ball,  
 And all the court was gaily fain to go  
 Lightly about the business of the mistletoe.

The young king walked within the hall and sighed.  
 "There is no face in all the world," he said,  
 "The sight of which I would not be denied.  
 Oh, Christmas is a sullen day, half fed  
 With memories of the Yuletides that are dead.  
 What ho! Go down into the town and find  
 A thousand gifts to be distributed  
 Among my Christmas guests. The world is blind.  
 Who gives a thousand gifts it deems, forsooth, is kind."

What time the courtiers went to do his will  
 It pleased the fancy of the king to go  
 Likewise within the town to walk until  
 The idle opal of the mere should glow  
 With sunset, silvering the little bow  
 Of moon. By the mere-marge he was aware  
 Of one who walked alone and did not know  
 His face. Ah, in her torn gown she was fair!  
 Her wild, wet eyes looked seaward through her wild, wet hair.

"Now hear the glad bells tilt their silver speech  
 Of merry Christmas-time!" the young king cried.  
 "Why are you walking weeping down the beach  
 When all the world keeps holiday beside?"  
 "Nay, sir," the maiden said, "the world is wide,  
 And joy is far to seek. I never pray  
 A gift from heaven that is not twice denied."  
 "Not so," the young king quoth. "If you will say  
 Three wishes to the wind, they shall be wrought today."

The maid laughed low, the weary little laugh  
 Of one who doubts the stars. Then swift the white  
 Upon her girlish cheek burnt out, and half  
 She turned, and half she smiled, and then a light

Danced in her eyes, to mock the fancied right.  
 "Lo! then," she cried, "I wish that I may wed  
 A prince—and find last summer's roses red—  
 And with the young king lead the dance tonight!"  
 The young king bowed his head. "It shall be done," he said.

Oh, still the village folk delight to tell  
 How on that wild, white Christmas eve, the while  
 The little maid Serena minded well  
 Her simple task, came those who, with a smile,  
 Bade her without, and there they made sweet trial  
 Of her flown speech, and won her 'mazed consent  
 To mount the king's coach, come for many a mile  
 To take her hence. And all in fear she went  
 With ermine softly folded round her garments' rent.

The king's palace was wonderful with green.  
 Lights lay within the dark like gems within  
 Long violet velvet fallen in folds between;  
 And all the air was musical with din  
 Of viols and flutes, and laughter most akin  
 To viols and flutes. And in an upper place  
 Serena stood and saw strange hands begin  
 To lay about her many a milky lace,  
 And with great flowery jewels to crown her flowerlike face.

At last they led her to the shining hall  
 Wherein the carven dais had been placed.  
 On either side before the patterned wall  
 The courtiers stood in silken raiment, laced  
 With precious things; and many pages paced  
 The hall to music, bearing at command  
 The costly gifts to each, as each was graced  
 With favor. There they bade Serena stand,  
 And she received no gift, but dreamed with idle hand.

Then with a lift of trumpets came the king;  
 In silver lace he came and bore one rose;  
 And at the music's poignant summoning  
 He crossed the breathless hall as one who goes  
 Upon a secret mission, and who knows  
 The secret well. And at the king's advance  
 The little maid saw the great circle close,  
 And, with the old surrender of a glance,  
 The young king and the village maiden led the dance.

He laid the crimson rose upon her breast.  
 "Behold," he breathed, "I give you of the red  
 Of summer, though you asked me but in jest  
 To bid the year deliver what was dead.  
 I give you of the red of spring," he said,  
 "And even now, with urge of smitten string  
 In the faint air, the labyrinth dance is led,  
 As you decreed. But ah, imperiling  
 My word, I send no prince to wed you," cried the king.

For he might see how dainty fair she seemed,  
 Like some white windflower in a windless glade;  
 And all his heart went out as he had dreamed  
 The hearts of kings might not. And, half afraid  
 Of her disdain, upon her hand he laid  
 His hand, and trembled and drew back, lest he  
 With his entreaty fright the little maid.  
 But she looked up, and all the court might see  
 How the old flower of love blooms everlastingly.

The king's palace was wonderful with green.  
 The Christmas chimes rolled silvery from the tower,  
 And in the hall Serena stood as queen,  
 And packed with rhythms was the dying hour.  
 For the young king had found the fairy power  
 That Christmas-tide yields up in sweet bequest;  
 For oh, not he who goldenly makes flower  
 The time with thousand gifts has Joy for guest:  
 Who grants some wish to some sad heart has won the best.



## HIS PREFERENCE

**S**ELDUM FEDD—Say, Soiled, if you was to take a job——  
**SOILED SPOONER**—Aw, don't talk such durned fal-dad!  
 "I'm just s'posin'; but s'pose, now, you had to take a job or be killed,  
 what kind o' one would you select?"  
 "Bein' a given point for parades to pass by."



## THE CHRISTMAS SERMON INTERRUPTED

**T**HE MINISTER—And now, beloved, before I close, let me sound one note of  
 warning——  
**THE FATHER OF A FAMILY** (*waking up*)—If you dare toot that blasted horn  
 of yours again I'll take it away from you.



## WE ALL LOVE HER

**J**ACK—What kind of a girl do you like to catch under the mistletoe?  
**FRED**—One who wouldn't let you kiss her anywhere else.

# CLAUDE FITZ-MAURICE, BAD MAN

By William R. Lighton

THE big Cow-land out West is a new land, and its rules for behavior are few and primitive, but they are none the less rigid because of their simplicity. The most hard-and-fast of all is that counterfeit assumption, in any of its forms, "don't go." If you have luck and nerve you may get yourself presented at the Court of St. James on the mere strength of your wealth, or your effrontery, or your social connections, and nothing will be likely to happen to mar your bland satisfaction with yourself; but don't try to work any such shabby artifice on the folk of Cow-land, for they will find you out in the first five minutes, and then you will be sorry and ashamed. Their exclusiveness is about the most adamant of earth. If you want to "belong" out there you must be willing to pay for the high privilege in the good coin of a primal, ingenuous honesty.

Understand: your moral virtues, as the term is used in older and more elegant circles, need not be conspicuously white and unspecked. Cow-land uncovers its head in the presence of an angelically pure woman, believes in her and is ready to shed the last drop of its warm, red blood for her. But it does not damn the lesser angels; and in a man it likes to discover the signs of virile, impetuous error—for to err is human, and Cow-land is intensely human to its heart's core. But don't try to put on a false air of worldliness or a false front of righteousness, for the sake of passing muster. Don't try to put on anything artificial, for that is a lie, and a lie, of whatever kind, told or acted with intent to deceive, is the

one unpardonable sin in that strange country. It was in overlooking this little fact that Claude Fitz-Maurice made his mistake.

He came to us when we were encamped by the springs at the head of Nigger Baby Creek, with the beef round-up. We were a mixed lot, very democratic, even catholic, so that a casual observer might have missed the signs of exclusiveness. There was the Perfesser, a college man full of learning, who was riding the range that summer for his health's sake; there was His Nobs, the younger son of a Scotch lord, who had sought Wyoming because there was no place for him at home; there was Jerry Kansas, who had killed two men at Dodge City and one at Crawford, in the old days; and there were Steve, and Red McGee, and Black's Jim, and a round dozen of others, each celebrated in his own way and each fitting into his niche quite naturally. There was no friction worth mentioning in camp until Claude came.

It needed but one brief, full look at him to prove that he was no good—a sham, a hollow mockery. We got that look as we sat at supper one evening, when he rode up over the trail from the south, dropped his rein upon his horse's neck and sat looking down upon us from the saddle.

He was fearfully and wonderfully made up, as if upon the theory that all the world was a stage devoted to cheap melodrama, and he was to play a part adapted from a novel of the sort written about the frontier by Down-eastern literary chaps, who depend upon occult inspiration, never having seen the land or its people. From no

other source but the pages of such romance could he have got his notions for his outfit. His hair was long, carefully barbered, falling clear to his shoulders from beneath a silver-trimmed sombrero with a four-inch brim; his flaxen mustache had a fierce, downward droop at the ends; his shirt of scarlet outing flannel was embroidered with crimson silk on the breast and collar; the lower legs of his dove-gray corduroy breeches were carefully tucked into the tops of a pair of fifteen-dollar hunting boots, such as you would see at an English anise-seed chase; his conspicuous spurs were heavily silver-plated; his gun, ostentatiously displayed at his belt, was no long, serviceable Colt's, but an English pistol, mounted with mother-of-pearl. Behind his saddle was tied a huge bundle done up in a flaming scarlet blanket. On top of all this he was smoking a cork-tipped cigarette.

He eyed us with a chilling, superior scowl; and, while we did our share of the looking, nobody spoke a word. Presently he flicked the ash from his cigarette with his little finger.

"Where's the gentleman that's in charge of you fellows?" he asked—as though he took us for a bunch of convicts or a camp of lunatics taking the fresh-air treatment. His voice was a ponderous bass, and he did not smile.

"I'm him," the boss answered, with his mouth full of beef.

The stranger took time to digest the information. "Do you want a man?" he asked then.

"For work or for ornament?" the boss returned gravely.

"For work," the stranger said.

"Well, we're awful short-handed. Are you cow-broke?"

"Sir?"

"Have you ever rode herd?" the boss explained. "I mean, what experience have you had with cattle?"

"Why, none, you might say, with cattle. But I can ride a hawss. I've been ridin' with Sioux Charlie's Wild West Show since spring, till just now."

"You must 've been a valuable man

to 'em," the boss commented. "How did you come to quit?"

"The show went broke, last week, down at Cheyenne. A turrible dead town, Cheyenne is. I couldn't find nothin' I wanted to do there. I thought mebbe there might be a chance up here, somewheres, till cold weather."

"What might your name be?"

"Claude Fitz-Maurice," the oddity said, with an air. As he pronounced it it was Fitz-Moreese. "Mebbe you've saw it on the show-bills. I was one of the principal characters in the stage hold-up act. My part was Wild Jim, chief of Crook's scouts."

A nervous stir ran through our company; hunger was forgotten for a time, while the boss pondered.

"I reckon we need a man like him, boys," he remarked, after a little time; and no one of us dissented. When all is said, a beef round-up is dull, hard work, sadly lacking in variety; and we seemed to want a little of that spice of life just then.

So Claude Fitz-Maurice dismounted, with a lofty swagger, and stood revealed in his full six feet of height. His eye caught that of Jerry Kansas, who squatted upon the sand nearby. Quite incongruously, this man-killer was very small and slender, barely five feet seven in his riding-boots, and his ordinary look and manner were mild and boyish.

"You come and take my hawss," Claude said, in stern command. We held our breath, but Jerry got up meekly and did as he was bidden, while Claude sat down in our midst for his supper. The etiquette of cow-camp prescribed that he should fill his own plate from the full row of Dutch ovens by the fire; but he was ignorant of this, and sat waiting to be served. His Nobs arose and gravely performed this office, solemnly consulting with Claude as to his likes and dislikes in food. Then Claude ate, while silence fell—a ponderable silence, of three dimensions. He showed no disposition to mix with us hirelings on terms of equality, and of course we let him alone until we

could have time to consult together over ways and means.

The council came soon, when we went in a body to the far side of the horse-corral to take our after-supper smoke, leaving the newcomer to the enjoyment of solitude. We all wanted to talk then, but somehow there was a dearth of fit words. Steve was the first to find the combination of speech. He said nothing in particular; he merely swore steadily for a minute or two, as a man will who is trying to get a bad taste out of his mouth.

"I've saw lots of fools just like him, and he's one of 'em," Jerry Kansas remarked. "Most likely he thinks he's a bad man. He'll be right funny. Orderin' *me* to take his hawss!"

Steve's big bronzed face showed a faintly dawning interest. "Bad man," he echoed. "Do you reckon so?" There followed a pause, while we turned the situation over, looking at the probabilities. "What'll we do?" Steve questioned. "Are we goin' to discourage him any?"

"It's 'most too soon, ain't it?" Black's Jim suggested. "When you want to take a good fall out of a critter you give him rope."

"That's so," Steve agreed. "Looks like he could run with a lot of rope, too, don't he? All right. There's rope enough and room enough."

I helped Steve with the dish-washing, while the others were busy with preparations for the night's concerns of sleeping and riding herd—all save Claude Fitz-Maurice, who lounged cross-legged beside the fire, consuming his scented cigarettes, stroking his mustache and practicing his ferocious scowl. Once or twice he got up and stood looking on curiously at what the others were doing, but he seemed not to know that this was work in which he should be sharing. No one made any suggestion, no one took open account of him at all until, somewhere about nine o'clock, we gathered around the fire for a last smoke. Usually that was the best hour of the day, when jocund, red-blooded humors rose free and strong,

and when mature responsibilities were forgotten for a little while; but on this night jollity was strangely subdued. Speech went on fitfully, expectantly, with long pauses that would give Claude a chance to come in if he wished; but he preserved his cold, calm aloofness, with never a word, his heavy, superior frown lowering upon us. It was Jerry who made the first feint at scaling the wall of the stranger's reserve.

"'Claude' is one of the names it makes me sick to say, for a man," he purred smoothly. "'Fitz' goes better."

Steve came gallantly to his support.

"Fits is a low disease," he demurred, with equal gentleness of manner. "It ain't a nice word. 'Convulsions' is more high-toned. Mebbe he'd rather be called that."

Claude turned his glance from one to the other fiercely.

"When you fellows speak to me, you can call me Mr. Fitz-Moreese," he said, in his most solemn bass; and silence fell again, while no man dared to look at his neighbor. We sat as dumb semblances of frightened meekness until the boss came up, after attending to some last detail of duty, and sat down with us. In Claude's eyes the boss stood for vested authority, and therefore for a sort of aristocracy, and he seemed to feel that he could hold converse with Aristocracy without loss of caste. He brought from his roll of blankets a quart bottle of whisky, drank deeply, and offered a drink to Aristocracy. Aristocracy, in his turn, would have passed the bottle on around the circle, but Claude deftly recovered it, and we menials went dry. Many things can be forgiven a man in Wyoming, but not that; no, not that.

He sat nursing the bottle between his knees, and presently he took another long pull. The two drinks brought an unwholesome flush to his cheeks, and he began to talk. Of course he talked of himself; but that was not the worst of it. Whether he thought to raise himself in our estimation, or whether it was just the natural bent of his nasty soul, may

not be told, but he bragged mightily of the things he had done to bring misery into the lives of women. Heaven knows that Cow-land is not puritanical; out there the natural man follows the promptings of his natural desires, and takes no shame to himself therefor. But there was an indefinable something in Claude's avowals that set him quite apart from his healthy-minded hearers. "Oh, I'm a devil with women!" he declared; and on his own showing it was truer than he meant. Watching, I saw those sun-browned faces grow grim with feeling far deeper than mere dislike.

Our tobacco burned out, and for once we wanted no more. Those who had the next watch with the herd got ready and rode away into the night, while the rest of us briefly prepared to tumble into the nests of blankets that lay here and there upon their soiled tarpaulins. Not so Claude. He watched us furtively, as we flung off our boots and dropped down in our places, but he made no move for bed. He sat beside the fire, cuddling his bottle; and in the last moment of ebbing consciousness I saw him lift it to his lips for another long swig.

Once, in the brief commotion of changing watch, I awoke. Red McGee and the Perfesser were standing in the moonlight beside the ashes of the dead fire, talking softly, and I arose and joined them. Claude lay prone upon the sand, in the dull, unlovely torpor of drunkenness, his face vacuous, brutalized, upturned in the clear, white light. McGee touched the insensate body with his booted foot.

"Gawd!" he said, with a disgust that would not be fully spoken. He stooped and picked up the half-empty bottle. McGee liked whisky; never before had I seen him willingly pass up a chance like this; but with an oath he sent the bottle whirling into the gloom, and we heard it smash upon the stones in the creek-bed. "Gawd!" he repeated. "Him a lady-killer! But I believe him. It's funny, ain't it? but a man like him always has the easiest time with women. I don't understand it."

"The world has never understood it, Red," said the Perfesser.

"Anyway, he's flew his kite with us, ain't he?" McGee remarked. "I'll bet he'll toddle in the morning."

But he lost his bet. When morning came Claude was in no fit condition to toddle. As we built the breakfast fire an hour before dawn he still lay in a sodden lethargy. His body was in the way and we dragged it off to one side, like any other piece of rubbish, and left it. When we thought of it again, after the first hurry of the morning, we discovered that McGee had not been thorough enough in breaking the first bottle, for Claude had brought another from his bundle and had crept with it beneath the mess-wagon. We knew then that so long as his liquor held out he would be drunk.

"The lower spring's good and cold," Black's Jim suggested. "We could duck him in there and get him waked up enough to ride."

But that method was too crude to satisfy the artistic sense of the Boss. "Wait awhile," he said. "We haven't got our money's worth out of him yet. Let him alone till he's himself, and then we'll see."

Fate kindly helped us toward a fitting solution of the problem. At mid-day, as we sat at dinner, another wanderer came into view over the southern trail—a woman. When she saw our camp she turned her horse aside and rode up to us. She was sadly bedraggled and worn, as by a long journey; and there were unmistakable signs upon her to prove that her life's trail had been bare and hard to follow. She was still young and not without good looks of a bold, tawdry order—a form of full, soft outlines, big eyes and yellow hair; yet over these was stamped, plain as day, the look of mortal weariness, of soul-languor, which only sin imparts. We knew her kind. No matter; she was a woman, and on her arm, held close against her round breast, she carried a tiny baby. At her approach the Boss arose and stood with bared head.

"Say," she asked directly, "have

you fellows seen a man go along here the last day or so—a tall man, ridin' a bald-faced sorrel?"

"Are you huntin' him?" the Boss returned.

"Huntin' him!" she flashed. "That's what I am, mister, and I'm goin' to find him, too."

The Boss took her bridle-rein. "Get down," he said kindly, "and get your dinner."

"I ain't hungry," she answered. "You seen him, I know you did, by the way you act. Which way did he go?"

"Get down and eat," the Boss insisted, "and then we'll talk. It's a long ways till you strike the next place where you can grub."

She suffered him to lift her from the saddle and sat down to her dinner. She was hungrier than she knew; she ate with a ravenous appetite, as though her last full meal had been far back in history. Her baby began to cry fretfully, and Jerry Kansas, the man with men's blood on his hands, took the little creature into his arms and walked with it back and forth in the shade of the cottonwoods until it dropped asleep.

"Give her to me," the mother said then. "I'm done eatin'. Now you tell me where he went."

"A tall man, ridin' a bald-faced sorrel," the Boss said. "A man with a big mustache, was he? and a red shirt and a Mexican hat——"

"That's him!" she cut in excitedly. "I knowed he'd come this way. I got track of him at Fort Laramie, comin' north. Where did he go from here?"

"Was his name Claude Fitz-Maurice?"

She gave a short, hard laugh, a laugh without any mirth in it. "That's one of his names," she said. "His right one's Ed McGinniss."

"What are you wantin' to find him for?" the Boss questioned. "He didn't look to me like he'd be worth takin' back."

"Take him back!" she retorted, with bitter scorn. "No, I ain't goin' to take him back. He shook us—me an'

the kid—at Cheyenne, an' run off with all we had. He's got three thousand dollars with him, an' us without a cent. I had to borrow this horse to ride. I can live, all right; but I'm goin' to make him give me enough to keep the kid from sufferin', I am, if it's the last thing I do in this world."

The Boss looked around upon us doubtfully, then turned again to the waiting woman. "So you're his wife," he said.

"What's that to you?" she returned harshly. "The kid's his. Ain't that enough?"

"Plenty," he answered. Then: "Well, boys, I reckon it's up to us. What'll we do? Better fetch him here, I expect."

No further word was needed. Willing hands were laid upon the inert brute under the wagon and he was dragged into view, feet first, with such rude unceremony that he sat up, dazed and blear-eyed. The morning's whisky was pretty nearly dead in him by this time and his face was overcast by a sick pallor. With an oath he kicked his legs free of our grasp. Then he saw the woman, and, if possible, his face went a shade paler. She drew nearer until she stood close before him.

"Well, Claude dear," she began, with biting irony; but the Boss was not inclined to waste time over ineffective theatricals.

"Look here, you hellion," he said, straight to the point, "is this your woman?"

Claude, seated upon the sand, scowled surlily around upon the circle that inclosed him. It was an appeal to public opinion; but it must have brought him small comfort. He staggered to his feet and stood leaning against the wagon, an evil sneer upon his face.

"Well, what of it?" he demanded, with his braggart boldness. "What have you got to do with it, anyway?"

The Boss took one long stride forward and stood confronting the fellow. He was not so tall as Claude, but there was that in his square, burly figure

which commanded respect. His usually tranquil eyes were aflame.

"You answer my question," he said. "Did you shake this woman at Cheyenne?"

Claude saw that he had better talk straight. "Yes," he blustered. "I was done with her and I quit her. What are you goin' to do about it?"

"And is this here your baby?"

"Maybe. Say it is; what then?"

"And you left 'em both that way, without nothin'?"

"It was my money," Claude said stubbornly. "I made it. It wasn't her'n. She's got no claim on it, nor on me neither. She ain't my wife."

The woman stood at the Boss's side, and now she broke out shrilly, with a tremor of hot anger in her voice: "If there was any law in this God-forsaken country——"

"You needn't to worry none about that," the Boss assured her gently. "There's law enough right here to deal with such as him." He stood with folded arms, looking Claude up and down, his wide lips parted in a smile that showed two rows of strong, white teeth. Once before I had seen him look like that, when Petey Petersen stole money from a sleeping man's pocket and was hauled up for judgment; and now I knew that Claude would have a milder time on the Last Day.

"You skunk!" the Boss drawled by way of a beginning; and he spoke many other names, some of which I had never heard before; but as he spoke them they seemed all very appropriate. "Now, here," he said at last, "you dig up half of what you've got and give it to her, and do it quick! Hear?"

Claude laughed insolently. Perhaps he thought, with the woman, that he was safely beyond the reach of vengeance. "You go to hell!" he said.

The Boss turned to us. "Boys," he said simply, and then we had a quarter of an hour of unmixed joy. In three seconds Claude was stretched upon the sand, held fast, hand and foot, shaking with rage and swearing frightfully. Much good it did him. We turned him

inside out. Secured beneath his belt we found half a hatful of greenbacks, folded in neat wads; also a diamond pin, two rings and a watch. These, with the pearl-handled pistol, we turned over to the woman. In other lands, where justice is merely a well-disciplined, formal servant of conventional needs, that would have satisfied the requirements of the case. It was different in Wyoming. There justice, unstraitened by precise rules, running free and breathing the air of the wilderness, must have her fling occasionally with the rest of us.

When we had made sure that there was no more treasure to be discovered somebody brought a pair of scissors, and Jerry Kansas, seated upon Claude's chest, began doing things to his flowing mane. Then Claude changed his tune; his fury ceased and he became abject. If we only please wouldn't cut his hair he would overlook everything and forgive us. He might have saved his breath. Jerry clipped and clipped until the left side of the victim's head was shorn clear down to the quick; then he took off the right half of the silky mustache; then he painted some ornamental designs in black axle-grease on the ugly cheeks and forehead. When that was done we let him up. He was weeping like a child—a most contemptible presentment. But we were wholly glad, feeling that the situation had been rounded out to completeness.

The wronged woman had stood looking on at our performance quite listlessly, without a word, pressing her baby against her shoulder, holding the money and jewelry in a fold of her skirt. She kept her dull silence while Steve caught and saddled Claude's horse and brought it up.

"Now, you ——," Steve said, mentioning one name which the Boss had overlooked, "you hit the trail and get out of the country as fast as you know how. Get a quick wiggle on you."

Slowly, as if his will to do or resist was at low ebb, Claude mounted and picked up his rein. Then we received a shock. With an inarticulate cry the

woman stepped swiftly to his side, turning there to face us.

"You ain't treatin' him right," she declared, her voice vibrant with sudden passion. "What kind of men do you call yourselves, anyway? I wouldn't treat a cur-dog like that."

There was a long, amazed pause. "Well, I'll be—jiggered!" the Boss breathed.

With a fine gesture she thrust the bills and trinkets into Claude's hand. "Here, you, take this stuff," she said.

"Wait a minute." Haughtily, defiantly, she caught her grazing horse, and clambered into the saddle without a glance toward us. "Come on, Ed," she cried. "I'm goin' with you."

We stood motionless and mute while they rode away side by side, watching until the first jutting spur of Rawhide Buttes shut them from view. Then we looked at one another sheepishly, shamefacedly.

"Well, I'll be—jiggered!" repeated the Boss.



## ANOTHER USE

**L**ITTLE drops of water,  
 Little grains of sand,  
 Increase the oil and sugar  
 For the grocery man.



## PIQUE

**M**ADGE—Do you think it paid those girls to quarrel?

MARJORIE—I should say not! Each will do her level best to give a more expensive Christmas present than the other.



## HIS YEARN

**H**E (*who boards, and therefore always hungers*)—After all, there is nothing like two at a table.

SHE (*who sighs for him*)—A man and——?

HE (*promptly*)—A man and a turkey!

Jan. 1905

## AT THE WELL

TOUCH love lightly at the brink  
 Where the sunlit pool is clearer;  
 Seek no further, draw no nearer,  
 Touch love lightly at the brink  
 Lest 'tis deeper than we think.

Take the sparkle; do not drink,  
 Lest each draught be sweeter, dearer,  
 Eyes reflecting eyes grow clearer;  
 Dim love's vision at the brink—  
 Lest 'tis deeper than we think.

Still love's word—for pebbles sink;  
 Trouble not the waters nearer,  
 Bitter depths may be still dearer;  
 Lean and look and do not shrink—  
 Ah! 'tis deeper than we think!

VIRGINIA WOODWARD CLOUD.



## FRAGILE

TED—Tom broke the Christmas present he gave his wife.  
 NED—What was it?  
 "He'd signed the pledge."



## POOR WOMAN!

MISS SPRIGGS—Miss Flashly seems to be very nervous and perturbed these days.

Miss WIGGS—Yes; she has been elected president of the Don't Worry Club, and has not mastered the rules as yet.



THE transmission of germs is not the only dangerous thing about kissing.

# MRS. BRADY'S LOVER

By Kathryn Jarboe

SHE saw him for the first time in London—in London, just a week before she was to sail for home. Possibly it is lese-majesty to suggest that an American of Mrs. Brady's rank could see anyone not presented to her with proper credentials. Possibly it may be asked if the king ever sees the cat. Be that as it may, Mrs. Brady did see him. She did look at him for quite all of the seconds in a moment, and she realized very definitely that this was not the first time that he had looked at her.

In a way, he was as good to look at as she was. For, while she was the perfect product of nature and art combined by many millions of dollars, he had escaped quite perfect from one of Nature's treasure-houses. As Mrs. Brady turned her head away from him she sighed unconsciously and smiled consciously. Perhaps he saw the smile. She turned her head again to give an unnecessary order to the footman and, assuredly, he saw the dimple that was almost a blemish in the exquisite oval of her cheek.

That night Mrs. Brady was dining at her hotel and she saw him again, this time seated at a table not so far from her own and so much in line with Mr. Brady's left ear that she could not quite avoid seeing him whenever she spoke to Mr. Brady. After that Mrs. Brady seemed much more inclined to dine at the hotel than she had before. She declined several invitations and said that it bored her terribly to dine in strange places.

Mr. Brady was not in the habit of paying much attention to his wife,

but, once or twice, at these very domestic little dinners, it seemed to him that her soft, purring voice had grown singularly clear and distinct. Once, when she was telling a friend that they were going to sail on the *Lucania*, on Thursday, he glanced about to see if her voice really had carried to all of the surrounding tables, as it seemed to him it must have done.

When Mrs. Brady's maid was tucking that lady's steamer rug about her on the deck of the *Lucania*, she noticed, with professional interest, a quick, dainty rush of color on her mistress's cheeks. Certainly madame was much more beautiful with that delicate flush under her small, shell-like ears. Toinette made a note of this for future use, but Toinette had not noticed the tall, distinguished foreigner who had passed quite close to Mrs. Brady's chair.

In the days that followed the little becoming color was constantly floating back and forth, and Toinette was not the only person on the *Lucania* who thought that Mrs. Brady was more beautiful than ever. And all the time Mrs. Brady was wondering who and what he was. Why did he make no effort to meet her? Why did he make no effort to speak to her? For she was almost afraid that she would have forgiven a presumptuous word, that a smile might have been answered with—a scornful glance?—no, perhaps even a smile. And Peter Brady, in spite of his millions, was so easy to approach! Might not Peter Brady have been a stepping-stone to Mrs. Brady's acquaintance? From shore to shore Mrs. Brady's eyes were

seemingly intent upon the azure sea that matched them so well, but in reality she was watching for him, she saw only him; and he rested content to be near her, to see her and—possibly—to know that she knew.

On the last night out Mrs. Brady walked quite alone to the far end of the deck. There was a light, drifting fog and the world seemed very empty and cold. She had never cared for Peter, for anything about Peter except his money. And now she hated that. She hated the big house that was waiting for her. She hated the empty life and the empty friendships that would so soon envelop her. She knew that she would be just as much alone in all that crowd as she was here on this empty deck. The tinkling chords of a guitar floated up to her from some dark corner and a gay voice caroled:

"The earth is all amiss without that little kiss;  
Should'st thou give it not, mine the warrior's lot!"

Then Mrs. Brady was sure that she heard the sound of a kiss, and she shrugged her shoulders slightly—kisses were so vulgar. But all at once she realized that they were just what she wanted. She wanted love and kisses, for she had never, never had them. She shivered; she was cold, for she had dropped her little ruffled chiffon cape upon the deck when she had leaned over the railing to look for the lovers who had love and kisses.

Suddenly the cape was placed about her shoulders. A foreign voice murmured, "Permit me."

The whole world grew warm and full. It seemed to Mrs. Brady that never, never again would she be alone or lonely, and all night long the caressing voice rang in her ears, the caressing hand touched her shoulders.

There were two weeks in town and then came New Harbor. Only twice did she see him in town, but he was waiting in the throng that gaped at her as she descended from her car, and the thin veil that she wore hid neither the dimple nor the blush that, in spite

of all of Mrs. Brady's self-restraint, acknowledged his presence.

It had often seemed to Mrs. Brady that she could exist quite comfortably without New Harbor. New Harbor knew that it could not exist without Mrs. Brady. Her every movement was heralded and chronicled. Her every word was quoted and misquoted. When she appeared abroad there seemed always to be a small crowd of admirers waiting to observe her manners, her carriage, her costumes—all of her impedimenta. One addition to this throng excited no comment, yet in Mrs. Brady's mind the throng consisted only of a dark, sombre face, with level black eyes and curving red lips.

And still the man made no effort to meet her, although to Mrs. Brady it was perfectly evident that he was fitted by nature and rank to take his place in the little court that did homage to her. And yet Mrs. Brady was sure it was love for her that held him so near her, even as she was almost certain it was love for him that made the summer days so passionately sweet. Sometimes she was tempted to speak to some one of her friends about the distinguished foreigner, but always she dreaded to call attention to him. Nor was he stopping at any one of the summer hotels where he might, by chance or by design, be forced to meet her or someone—anyone who would present him to her.

One night there was a most elaborate dinner party at her own house and she grew weary of her guests. She slipped from the drawing-room, down through the sleeping garden, out toward the moonlit cliffs and then, in the shadows of the rose garden, she saw him.

"You! You here!" she cried, revealing in her tone and in her eyes how she had longed for him.

"Yes, here—now—every night—always," he answered, holding the hands that she had stretched toward him.

"I—I must go," she cried, half insistent, wholly reluctant.

He detained her only long enough

to raise one hand to his lips; but every evening after that, wherever Mrs. Brady was, whatever she was doing, she knew that he was there at the edge of the rose garden waiting for her. There were some nights—only a few—when he did not wait quite alone, for she would slip away from her guests and creep like a fragrant shadow down to see if he really was there. And once he heard her and spoke to her, but she would not give him her hand again. Her confusion was that of a schoolgirl when she stammered:

"I only wanted to see if you were really there. You must not stay, you know. You must not come again."

She asked him why he did not come to her house openly, why he did not obtain introductions to her. The warmth of her tone told him that he would not be denied if he came and asked for—for friendship. And he replied that in the world where he lived alone, in the romance with which he surrounded himself, she was his and his alone. If he entered her world she could never be more than—

The rose leaves stirred and she fled back to her guests, but she carried the breath of his world with her and it seemed to her that love was indeed sweet.

It was two days after this that Mrs. Brady went back to town. There were some errands to be done, some gowns to be looked at, some jewels to be reset. Peter was to meet her at the town house. She hated to leave New Harbor even for an hour. She hated to leave her new-found joy, and she wondered if he would know that she had gone. It had not seemed necessary to bring Toinette. It was but a step from the car to the carriage that was waiting for her.

"You may stop at Acre's," she said to old Brooks, her husband's coachman, who would tolerate no footman on the box beside him even when he drove his master's wife.

But just as Mrs. Brady was about to draw the door shut she saw the eyes and the lips and the sombre, moody face. With an imperative gesture she

opened the door and the man entered the carriage.

"There is no one in town," she whispered hurriedly. "Surely we can have this little moment." Love had made her overbold, perhaps, but love is very daring and not always scrupulous.

Then, as they drove through the deserted street, he poured out his love for her. He had seen her first in Paris! He had been dazzled, overwhelmed by her beauty! He had loved her then! He had adored her ever since! He had thought of nothing else day or night! He had followed her day and night wherever she had gone! He loved her! He loved her!

At first Mrs. Brady tried to stop the impetuous words that rushed from his lips, but little by little they drew her out of herself. She listened. She yielded more and more to the soft persuasion of eyes and tone. He was holding her hands in his. He was covering them with kisses. Once, as he crushed her fingers in his, she cried that her rings were cutting the flesh. He drew the jewels off slowly, one by one, and she, opening the small morocco bag she carried, let him drop them in.

Again he covered the white hands with kisses.

"They are so much sweeter now—so much more the hands of the woman I love!"

And this time Mrs. Brady shrank from the passion in his voice. But they had drawn up in front of the florist's shop, and young Acre, seeing his richest patron before his door, started toward her.

"Oh, he must not see you here," she cried, and sprang from the carriage. It was a somewhat complicated order that she had to give—flowers for a children's hospital and flowers for New Harbor—and she was detained for several minutes. When she returned to the carriage it was empty. She stopped aghast. Why had he gone? Why had he left her—then? Why had he not waited?

"Did you say through the Park, ma'am?" queried the stolid Brooks, his eyes fixed on vacancy.

"No, I said directly home," she answered.

Home! Home to Peter! Home, away from all that delirious, bewildering love! She covered her face with her hands and then she kissed them herself. It was almost as though he were kissing her, and she laughed—a low, gay ripple of laughter. The love was hers. It really was hers no matter where she went, no matter whom she was with.

The carriage had stopped and she saw that the windows of the library were opened. Peter was waiting for her, then, waiting to consult her about the jewels that were to be reset. Mechanically she felt for the small morocco bag that held them, the bag into which her lover had dropped her rings. And once again, even then, she kissed the hand that he had kissed.

But she did not see the morocco bag. She peered anxiously in every corner. It was nowhere, and then, all in a second, in one vivid flash, Mrs. Brady understood. For an instant she was absolutely motionless. No expression crossed her face, no sound passed her lips, and, incredible as it would seem to anyone who knew that the value of the jewels was well over half a million dollars, Mrs. Brady's only thought was of her shattered romance, of the love she had lost—of the love she had never had. At last, however, she roused herself. After all, the jewels had been Peter's. Peter was waiting.

In the library Peter was impatient.

"Give me the things, Molly, as quick's you can. What's the matter? Was the train late? I've been waiting half an hour for you."

"I'm—I'm very sorry, Peter," murmured Mrs. Brady, "but—but—I—I didn't bring them. I left them on my dressing-table." Mrs. Brady's real consciousness was a certain pride in her own composure, but subconsciously she was wondering how she could gain time—for him. "I'll write Toinette to bring them, and I'll wait here until she comes."

But Peter would not wait, and before Mrs. Brady could interfere he was

calling for his New Harbor mansion on the telephone. And while Mrs. Brady, with elaborate carelessness, was arranging a stray lock of hair in front of a mirror, the first inquiry was made in the Brady jewel robbery, that occupied society and the police for several months.

Everybody in the Brady household was suspected, but, owing to Mrs. Brady's solicitous caution, everybody was completely cleared of suspicion. Mrs. Brady was of course positive that she had left the red morocco bag on her dressing-table. Toinette knew positively that madame had taken the bag, that madame had worn her rings, but the French girl's knowledge had to be tempered by discretion. It was entirely beneath Brooks's dignity to know whether or not Mrs. Brady had carried her red bag when she entered the carriage. It is quite possible that he did not, in reality, know that one of Mrs. Brady's friends had driven with her from the train to Acre's. Brooks's eyes and Brooks's ideas had been trained to absorb themselves in vacancy.

The most searching inquiries revealed nothing. For days, for weeks, even, the daily papers paid the Brady jewel robbery the homage of their largest type and their most conspicuous columns, but all to no purpose. The items that most interested the smart world, however, appeared in the society journals. These noted the fact that the beautiful Mrs. Brady was showing, in lack of color, in lack of vivacity, the worry her loss had been to her. These journals also described in detail the exquisite jewels that Mr. Brady had purchased for his wife to take the place of those she had lost. They also questioned why Mrs. Brady refused to wear the new pearls, the new diamonds and emeralds. For Mrs. Brady was indeed appearing at all sorts of social functions, gowned as faultlessly as ever, but conspicuously destitute of jewels.

It was at New Harbor's Horse Show that some of her friends commented on this fact; at least, it was there

that they expressed their comments to her. They had been expressing them to each other for many days. But Mrs. Brady's only answers were impatient shrugs and almost imperceptible shudders.

On the way home from this Horse Show Mrs. Brady saw once more the dark, sombre face, the level eyes and curving red lips. She was alone in her carriage at the time, and for that she was thankful. She knew that her cheeks had grown scarlet, that her eyes had filled with tears, and she was glad that there had been no one near to notice her. At the same time she was conscious that he had seen the color that swept over her face, even if he had not seen the mist that veiled her eyes. And his face! Had it not held an appeal to her? Had his eyes not sent a message to hers? Was it possible that she would see him that night—that he would come to her, after all—that he would be at the rose garden tryst once again?

She was dining at home with a score of guests, and never in all her life had a dinner lagged so interminably. An hour before she could go to him her every thought had fled to the tryst at the edge of the rose garden. And yet, when she was free, her steps faltered and held back. How could she bring herself to meet him again after he had betrayed her as he had! But then, she hurried on again. He might not have waited! He might not be there!

It was in breathless confusion that she came upon him, quite suddenly, at last. He was waiting for her, where he had so often waited, just in the shadow of the roses.

She had no words for him and he, at first, had none for her. Then he held toward her the red morocco bag.

"I've brought them back," he said. "Oh, it was not for the jewels I cared." A little sob caught her words, but he heard. "I thought—I thought——"

"And I thought that it was only for the jewels that I cared," he interrupted. "But I found that I valued them less than—something I lost when I took them. I've lost it, I know, forever, but let me make what amends I can. Perhaps you can forgive me, some day, if you will only remember that wherever I am, I—I am—thinking of you, loving you, and that because I am loving you I am—different. That is all that you need to know or to understand."

He turned away abruptly, but halted at the sound of her voice. When he looked again she was standing with both hands stretched out to him. In a moment he was again before her. The red morocco bag fell unnoticed at their feet.

It was half an hour later when Mrs. Brady rejoined her guests in the long drawing-room. Her eyes were sparkling with all their old fire. Her old vivacity showed in every movement.

"I have kept my surprise until now," she cried. "The lost jewels are here. They were never stolen. I found them this afternoon in the rose garden. I must have dropped them there that morning when I was late for the train."

There was such a curious, exultant ring in her voice that many of her guests wondered if Mrs. Brady had really cared so desperately for the lost jewels. They did not notice the slight start with which, as she spoke, she remembered that the red morocco bag was still lying where it had fallen under the rose-bush.



## LIBERTY RETAINED

HOWELL—Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

POWELL—Yes; many a fellow would be in jail if he didn't watch out.

## A SKATING ROMANCE

I SAW the trim and rosy maid  
 When she began to skate;  
 The while, with swift and graceful glides,  
 She cut the figure 8.

I fell in love, right there and then,  
 As Cupid's victims do;  
 And felt convinced that we were meant  
 To cut the figure 2.

I wooed and won the lovely girl  
 So fervently I sought,  
 And ever since that glad event  
 I've cut the figure 0.

McLANDBURGH WILSON.



## STILL A WOMAN

BESS—If she loves him, why wasn't she pleased when he gave her a kiss for Christmas?

JESS—She pouted and said she wanted something she could show to her friends.



## HIS PROGRAM

"I WISH I had enough money to endow a college."  
 "Which one would you endow?"

"Oh, I wouldn't endow any, but I'd have a great time blowing in the money."



EVERY wedding is a success, even though some marriages are notable failures.

# THE LAUREL WREATH

By Gustav Kobbé

EXCEPT on the one evening of the year when it is in use, it hangs by a nail behind the proscenium. The assistant stage manager almost touches it every time he presses the buzzer which signals for the raising or lowering of the curtain.

But what is "it"?

Ah! I forgot you did not know. It is so familiar to us who live behind the scenes.

"It" is the laurel wreath—the famous laurel wreath!

Let me explain. You know how every opera season goes out in a blaze of glory. They do not content themselves with one opera that night, or even with two short ones, like "Cavalleria" and "Pagliacci," which make a very nice double bill. No! That would not be enough for such a grand occasion. Incidentally, it also is the director's benefit. So he arranges a bill that will include all the great singers and fill the house—an act from this, a scene from that, an aria from the other. Always the evening winds up with the prison trio from "Faust." When Marguerite dies the season dies with her; and while the scene at the back parts in the middle and the audience watches Marguerite being borne to heaven in the arms of angels, the director is in a seventh heaven of his own. For he is in the box-office counting the receipts.

It is all "velvet" for him, as the saying is. For in every singer's contract there is a stipulation that he or she shall sing at the director's benefit for nothing. They go about grumbling over it, and yet, if a singer were left out of the bill it would be a mortal

offense. For would it not mean that his name did not amount to enough as a drawing card? So, for a fortnight preceding the benefit there is a peculiar atmosphere of possible indignation and injured *amour propre* behind the scenes, until, at last, the bill and casts are posted in the stage entrance and everyone sees that he or she is in it. Then it is they begin to grumble because they are and because they have to sing for nothing.

If the director is new at the game he is very much worried and is afraid that on the afternoon of his performance he will be flooded with physicians' certificates that this, that or the other great singer is indisposed. But if he has had experience he will lean back in his chair and smile at the rumors of mutiny that reach him from downstairs. For he will have become familiar with the peculiar species of the genus *homo* known as the opera singer, and be aware that it is composed of grown-up children, who, if only you pretend to humor them, are perfectly tractable. He also will know that not one of the great singers, those upon whom the success of the evening really depends, would miss getting the laurel wreath.

The laurel wreath! I had almost forgotten about it.

Of course, if you have been to one of these remarkable benefit performances, you will remember that the selections from the various operas are so made that in each of them some particular singer scores the hit. It may be a tenor in the first, a prima donna in the second, another tenor in the third, and so on; but each number has

been chosen because it will show off one or another of the great singers to the best advantage. Then when the curtain calls come the etiquette of the occasion allows this singer to take a step or two out in front of his colleagues and acknowledge the applause as if it were intended mainly for him, while the others stand back and smile, but do not bow quite so frequently or so profoundly.

And now one of the great moments of the evening is at hand. The artists have disappeared behind the curtain, but the applause continues. The singer appears again, but this time alone, though he turns toward the curtain and holds out his hand as if he were trying to coax the other artists to join him, and shrugs his shoulders and makes an apologetic gesture as much as to say, "I have tried my best, but I cannot persuade them to come out."

At this point in the proceedings an usher is seen half running, half sliding down the centre aisle. He bears a huge laurel wreath bound with a broad red ribbon. He seems in a great hurry, as if afraid the singer might retire behind the curtain before the wreath is handed up to him. Reaching the orchestra rail he passes it, with the aid of a violinist and a double-bass-player, to the conductor.

Meanwhile the singer is bowing and smiling toward the audience, as if he had not seen the usher and had no idea what was coming.

Ah! that wave of applause! What does it mean? The conductor is holding up something for him to take. A laurel wreath! For him! Really? What a tribute! *Magnifique!* And so unexpected! Surprise, delight, gratitude are depicted on his face as he bows and smiles again and again before he finally retires behind the curtain and dodges to avoid colliding with the column of an Egyptian temple, which the grips are shoving into position in their hurry to set the scene for the next number on the program.

This number is one of the great

scenes in the dramatic soprano's repertoire. The number ends in a blaze of glory for her, and the episode before the curtain is repeated, except that this time it is she who remains to receive the honors alone. Again the usher performs his sprinting act down the aisle, again a laurel wreath tied with a broad red ribbon is passed over the footlights, there is the same exhibition of surprise, incredulity, joy—done a little more prettily, perhaps, because this time it is a woman instead of a man—and the prima donna retires behind the curtain, where her husband is waiting to throw a cloak about her and to pilot her to the dressing-room, while the temple disappears in various directions, and, in some mysterious manner, a garden springs up in its place.

And now something curious happens; curious, however, only in connection with something that has happened several times before during the evening and will be several times repeated—in fact, after each scene. The assistant stage manager appears at the dressing-room door. He wishes to convey mister the director's compliments to madame, and, as the laurel wreath is so very large, mister the director will himself have it sent to madame's hotel.

Madame is quite overcome with mister the director's attention, and her husband hands the laurel wreath to the assistant stage manager. The latter hurries with it to the little door that connects the stage with the lobby and passes the wreath into the hands of the usher who is there waiting for it. There is no time to lose. The assistant stage manager hastens to his place in the "prompt entrance." The electrician already has turned on the "blues," the garden scene is bathed in moonlight, and Juliette, whose number this is, is ready to go on.

She, too, will receive a laurel wreath, and so will each of the other great singers who are to appear—a laurel wreath tied with a broad red ribbon. And in each case mister the director will show the singer the deli-

cate attention of offering to have the wreath sent home.

And the audience? Each time the usher half runs, half slides down the aisle, and a laurel wreath is deftly passed over the footlights, a wave of enthusiasm sweeps over the house. Truly it is a great night! And those laurel wreaths! What a lot of money they must have cost!

Now it is all over. The last farewells have been said and the final curtain call has been acknowledged. So I will let you into a secret, if indeed you have not already guessed it. Each time it is the same laurel wreath. At the same time it is not a laurel wreath at all. It is skilfully made of paper leaves, and, when mister the director's compliments have been conveyed to the last singer in the bill, the broad red ribbon is removed, carefully folded and laid away in a drawer in the property-room, while the assistant stage manager ties a string around the wreath and hangs it by a loop on a nail behind the proscenium.

The great artists when they return the following season will see it there, but they will not refer to it among themselves. You will have observed that the assistant stage manager did not intercept them as they came off the stage, but allowed the laurel wreath each time to be carried to the singer's dressing-room. That was part of the strategy by which at the end of each season the pleasing fiction is established that each of the great singers has received a beautiful laurel wreath tied with a broad red ribbon, a tribute from mister the director to his distinguished artists. Everyone behind the scenes knows just how the matter stands, but the pleasing fiction is cheerfully permitted to prevail.

The laurel wreath, all the time it hangs there by a nail behind the proscenium, is an object of veneration, a fetich, to those members of the company who hope some day to be great. It is the visible symbol of their goal, the height of their ambition. For is it not only the greatest

singers to whom it is passed up at the gala performance of each season?

"Some day," says the assistant stage manager to the young soprano who comes off the stage after having sung more than usually well, "you will get the laurel wreath."

It is the greatest compliment he can pay her, the greatest hope he can hold out to her. Her eyes sparkle, her young bosom heaves with pride. When she reaches her dressing-room she gazes with a far-away look into her glass, for in its depths she sees the centre aisle, and half running, half sliding down it, an usher with a huge laurel wreath tied with a broad red ribbon!

So there it hangs by a string from its nail behind the proscenium, an inspiration to all. Never has it been allowed to leave the sacred precincts of the opera house.

"Never," did I say?

Ah, I myself have been carried away by reverence for this fetich, and for the moment have forgotten that I have told you all this about the laurel wreath because I wanted to tell you of the only occasion when it was allowed to be taken out of the opera house.

It was as a tribute to "Papa" Dessaux.

There!—I have overlooked the fact that probably you never have heard of "Papa" Dessaux, although, if you were familiar with affairs behind the scenes or were even acquainted with one or two of the singers, you would know all about "Papa."

To begin with, he was a dear old man. Everybody behind the scenes loved him. You can judge that from everybody's calling him "Papa." I believe he had a name. I have been told that it was Antoine. But behind the scenes he was "Papa"—always "Papa." Dear old "Papa" Dessaux!

Of course he had once been young. We knew the tradition. Many years ago mister the director's uncle was the manager of a French *opéra bouffe* company, and mister the director, then a boy, sold librettos on the sidewalk in

front of the house. When the sale was over for the evening the boy would go behind the scenes and get one of the singers to help him with his French lesson for the next day. The singer had a light tenor voice and a nice taste for comedy. Often the lesson was interrupted, for the singer had to go on the stage and sing and amuse the audience before he could return to the wings where the boy, book in hand, was waiting for him.

It was many, many years before the boy became mister the director of a grand opera company. But he had not forgotten the singer with the light tenor voice and the nice taste for comedy, who always had been willing to help him out with his lessons. So, when he established himself at the opera house, he brought "Papa" with him.

"Papa's" light tenor voice was a thing of the past when we came to know him. He was quite old and gray. His manners were very sweet and gentle, and everyone in the company, from mister the director down, loved him. There was a regular "Papa" robe behind the scenes, and never more than a week passed before every latest newcomer in the company grew as fond of the old man as the rest of us. "Papa" was so quiet, so unobtrusive and yet so unselfishly interested in everyone about him. I could tell you the story of Giacomo, the Italian chorus singer, and Johanna, the blond Viennese dancer—how they became engaged and then quarreled because of some things that little vixen Margareta, also of the chorus, told Johanna; how "Papa" grieved over the quarrel and brought them together again; how, when the marriage happily came off, Johanna, who had no relatives here, insisted that "Papa" should give her away; how "Papa" advised them to quit the stage and set up a costume establishment, which they did and made money; and how they named their first baby after "Papa"—which was the way we discovered that his name was Antoine.

When "Papa" came to the opera

house he found that the first bassoon in the orchestra was an old friend of his. The first bassoon knew the second horn, who knew the third trombone; and so "Papa" came to know them too. Now and then these musicians would arrive a little early and they, with "Papa," would sit down at a table in the property-room and start a rubber of whist. If they hadn't time to finish it before the call for the orchestra they would continue it between the acts and even after the opera.

But "Papa" had other accomplishments. Although he had been a light opera singer and had sung principal roles only in light opera, his experience as a minor singer in grand opera also had been considerable, and he knew all the routine of the stage. A man like that can make himself very useful behind the scenes if he wants to, and it was "Papa's" way to want to.

There are operas like "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin" which call for trumpeters on the stage or behind the scenes; and others, like "Les Huguenots" and "Aida," in which an entire military band is used. It is difficult for the conductor to give these players their cue. He has quite enough to look after the orchestra and the singers. On such occasions "Papa" was invaluable. He would stand in the wings, where he could catch the conductor's eye, pass along the cue to the musicians behind the scenes and then conduct them himself, so that they always were in absolute time with the orchestra.

Then there was the beating of the anvils in the Nibelheim scene of "Rheingold." As you know, they are indicated in the score, and, to be effective, must fall exactly on certain beats. The misshapen Nibelungs are supposed to be hammering out treasure in the caverns of Nibelheim. Wotan and Loge hear the click, click of the anvils as they enter the subterranean domain in their search for Alberich. As a matter of fact, the Nibelungs are six stage hands who sit at a table behind the scenes. Each is armed with a hammer, and in front of him on the

table lies a bar of iron. "Papa" would sit at the head of the table, like a patriarch. He, too, held a hammer in his hand, and in front of him lay a bar of iron. Just at the right moment he would raise the hammer; the others would do likewise, and—click, click, click, click—click, click—the hammers would come down in unison on the iron bars and hammer out the peculiar rhythm of the Nibelung motif.

But even this was not "Papa's" great act. Undoubtedly his star performance was the storm in "Rigoletto." Why dear old "Papa" Dessaux, who was mildness itself, should care to stand behind the scenes and frantically thump the "thunder-box" while on the stage poor Gilda was being skilfully stilettoed and thrust into a bag by Sparafucile we failed to understand, until it was explained to us by mister the director, who did not wish anything "Papa" did to appear eccentric. It seems that once, and once only, in "Papa's" career had it fallen to the dear man's lot to sing a principal role in grand opera. The regular tenor had become indisposed and "Papa" had taken his place as Il Duco in "Rigoletto." His voice was much too light to have made any effect in the role, but it was a principal role nevertheless, and his name was on the program, and the program hung framed in his room.

For this reason, when, during the last act of "Rigoletto" the tenor was singing "*La donna e mobile*" and the house was hanging on every measure of "*Bella figlia*," the famous quartet, "Papa" stood, drumstick in hand, beside the "thunder-box," which is nothing more than a big bass drum with a square frame instead of a circular one, and, when at last the time came—when the stage grew dark, and the wind began piping up in the orchestra—thump! thump! such a storm was unleashed as never was known behind the scenes of any other opera house. It was great. You felt as if everyone on the stage were being drenched. And then the dying away of the tempest! How skilfully it was

managed! The most artistic kind of a *decrecendo*, with a faint tap at the end—the storm making a last grimace from a safe distance.

"Ah, 'Papa'!" mister the director would say, "that was a great storm. I am sure poor Gilda is soaked through and through." Then he would pat the old man on the shoulder. It was touching to see them.

No doubt, from a superficial point of view, the "Rigoletto" storm was "Papa's" greatest achievement. But, looked at purely from the point of view of art, it was not to be compared with the part he played in keeping up the little fiction regarding the laurel wreath. For he was then acting in a little comedy so delicately adjusted in its relation to what really occurred, so subtle in its "atmosphere," that the slightest error, the merest raising of the mask, would have been fatal to the role and have dispelled the charm that clung to the laurel wreath.

Not by so much as a slip, however, did "Papa" ever come out of his role. When he appeared at the dressing-room door, let us say of one of the prima donnas, pleasure mingled with congratulations that it was she who had received the coveted trophy was shown on his beaming face, and his respectful manner conveyed the sense of homage which he felt due to one who had added this rare distinction to her previous triumphs. Then, with something of the grace that must have been his in his younger days, he would deliver mister the director's compliments and message, and, on receiving the wreath from her, bow himself out of her presence with much ceremony. Nothing had been done to mar the precious illusion.

But now? Poor "Papa" Dessaux! We no longer see him standing in the wings watching for his cue from the conductor, or at the head of the table where the anvil-beaters sit, or, drumstick in hand, ready to whack the thunder-box. The bassoon-player, who knew the horn-player, who knew the trombone-player, goes at once to his place in the orchestra and leaves

as soon as the curtain is down. And never again will "Papa" appear with much ceremony at the dressing-room door and present mister the director's compliments. The assistant stage manager has taken his place.

I cannot say how it was we began to notice that "Papa's" age was telling upon him. Was it the bassoon-player who gave us the first hint? I remember he told us that "Papa's" game showed a decided falling off, that he was beginning to play his hand as if his memory were failing and that he even had trumped his partner's trick.

Ah! but we had noticed something of the same kind. He was less alert, less on the *qui vive* in the little duties he had made his own. At last one night, when the storm in "Rigoletto" was at its height, he handed the drumstick over to one of the stage hands and himself sat down to rest on a "practical" tree stump that had been got out with other stage properties ready for use in the "Siegfried" matinee the next day.

After that "Papa" aged so rapidly that no one behind the scenes could fail to observe it. One night he did not come at all. The next day we heard that he had caught a heavy cold; then that it had developed into pneumonia and that mister the director was seeing to it that he had the best of medical attendance and nursing. At last came the news we all were prepared to hear, for we knew what it means when a very old man gets pneumonia. "Papa" was dead. He was to be buried from the house of Mr. and Mrs. Giacomo Bertoni, the costumers, none others than our old friends Giacomo and Johanna, who were prospering in business and had a strapping boy, Antoine Dessaux Bertoni, with his father's dark eyes, his mother's blond hair and the gentle manners of his godfather.

Too bad! But an opera house is a very busy place, and we were then right in the midst of preparations for the final benefit. There were only a few more days in the season, and

"Papa" was to be buried on the very day of the last performance.

In some ways this did not make so much difference in the funeral arrangements. The great artists could not have gone anyhow. They could not have risked possible damage to their voices, and, of course, while people are arriving at a funeral, there is a constant opening and shutting of doors and danger of drafts. Great singers are, by common consent of all who know anything about the life of an opera artist, absolved from all obligations which involve any risk to their voices. Because our great artists remained away from "Papa's" funeral it did not mean that they loved him any the less.

After rehearsal the day before the funeral we held a meeting on the stage to take up a collection for flowers and for a headstone. When all the money had been subscribed—the greatest difficulty we had was to keep the sum from being absurdly large—mister the director asked:

"And now has anyone anything else to suggest?"

There was a moment's silence, and then, just as the meeting was about to break up, a voice—it was one of the great singers—said:

"Let us bury him with the laurel wreath!"

A gasp went around the group. The laurel wreath! Let it go and not have it passed over the footlights at the benefit performance! That was too much. We adored "Papa." We were willing to line his grave with flowers and to erect a whole family vault over his remains. But the laurel wreath! "Papa" himself would have vetoed the proposition.

Then, of a sudden, as if a wireless message had gone the round of the group in the minutest fraction of a second, there was a change. Without a word having been spoken, everyone there seemed to realize that a halo of fiction hung over the laurel wreath—that dear old "Papa" could be buried with it and yet the great performance of the year pass off with all the ac-

customed *éclat*, the wreath included. The suggestion had been made by a prima donna—women are so much cleverer at such things than men—and, after that one gasp, there was a chorus of "*bravas*," as if she just had made the hit of her career.

And so it was that something which everyone at the opera house still talks about happened the next day. "Papa" lay on a veritable bed of flowers. There was an address telling how greatly he was beloved, which we listened to as if we hadn't known all about it ourselves. Of course the first bassoon, the second horn and the third trombone were at the service, and, after the address, they blew something very mournful. Then the little Antoine, with tears trickling down his face, placed a cross of immortelles on "Papa's" breast.

The great moment now was at hand. In the delegation from the opera house was the assistant stage manager. He sat with the wreath hung over his knees, the other end resting on the ground. The broad red ribbon was tied around it. Next to him was the usher—the very usher who, on the last night of the season, bore the laurel wreath down the aisle. The tribute paid to "Papa" was to be as much like the real thing as possible.

When the little Antoine had retired to his mother's arms the assistant stage manager carefully lifted the laurel wreath from the ground and handed it to the usher. The latter solemnly walked down the aisle of mourners and—the finest touch of all—instead of placing the wreath directly on the coffin, deposited it in the hands of the trombone-player. The latter passed it to the horn-player, who passed it to the bassoon-player—just as if it were being handed up over the orchestra—and it was

"Papa's" old friend, the bassoon-player, who finally laid the precious wreath on his bier.

It was all done so naturally—it seemed so real!

And then what do you think happened? It shows what a clever man the assistant stage manager is. Surely he some day will have the full direction behind the scenes.

We were filing out and nearly everyone had left the room, when he stepped up to the coffin and, placing his hand on the laurel wreath, said to the undertaker:

"Mister the director's compliments, and he himself will see that the laurel wreath is sent over to the grave."

Then he removed it from the coffin, went downstairs, got into a cab which he had in waiting right in front of the door, and drove back to the opera house. When we, who were on foot, reached there the wreath was hanging in its accustomed place.

That night the last performance of the season passed off as brilliantly as usual. After every scene the usher half ran, half slid down the centre aisle, and a laurel wreath tied with a broad red ribbon was passed over the orchestra and handed up to one of the singers. Behind the scenes it was the assistant stage manager who paid the visits to the dressing-rooms.

At last Marguerite had died and had been borne heavenward by six coryphées of the *corps de ballet* attired as angels. The final curtain calls were taken and the last farewells were said. The lights were turned out. The building was wrapped in darkness, save for an electric lamp here and there to enable the night watchman to make his silent rounds.

In a cemetery over the river was a fresh-made grave. From a nail behind the proscenium hung the laurel wreath.



## AN IDEAL PLACE

"IN Greenland the nights are six months long."  
"That wouldn't be a bad place for a one-night stand of 'Parsifal.'"

## A TWENTIETH-CENTURY LOVE

WHAT to us is time or space,  
     Hours of absence, days of grace;  
     As we rule and reign alone  
     In a kingdom of our own?  
 Love like ours is up to date,  
 Sneers at fortune, conquers Fate;  
     Makes the loves of early times  
     Look like three bright, shiny dimes.  
 Couldn't we give cards and spades  
 To historic lovers' shades!  
     Easily our love can beat  
     That of Faust and Marguerite.  
 Héloïse and Abélard  
 Stooped to tricks that we'd discard;  
     Orpheus and Eurydice  
     Only knew a simple way;  
 Launcelot and Guinevere  
 Wondering would our love-songs hear,  
     And a few things we might show  
     Juliet and Romeo.  
 Hero we'd give pointers to,  
 Teach Leander how to woo.  
     I could coach Semiramis,  
     Trojan Helen teach to kiss.  
 You'd teach Dante and Petrarch,  
 Distance Cleopatra's Mark.  
     Oh, the loves of bygone days  
     Were not up to modern ways!

CAROLYN WELLS.



## UNPRECEDENTED

MRS. CRAWFORD—What was the surprise about the Christmas present  
     your husband gave you?  
 MRS. CRABSHAW—Why, getting it!



THERE are many ways to win a woman—but only one way for each woman.

# THE PURPLE PARASOL

By George Barr McCutcheon

YOUNG Rossiter did not like the task. The more he thought of it as he whirled northward on the Empire State Express the more distasteful it seemed to grow.

"Hang it all," he thought, throwing down his magazine in disgust, "it's like police work. And heaven knows I haven't wanted to be a cop since we lived in Newark twenty years ago. Why the dickens did old Wharton marry her? He's an old ass, and he's getting just what he might have expected. She's twenty-five and beautiful; he's seventy and a sight. I've a notion to chuck the whole affair and go back to the simple but virtuous Tenderloin. It's not my sort, that's all, and I was an idiot for mixing in it. The firm served me a shabby trick when it sent me out to work up this case for Wharton. It's a regular Peeping Tom job, and I don't like it."

It will require but few words to explain Sam Rossiter's presence in the north bound Empire Express, but it would take volumes to express his feelings on the subject in general. Back in New York there lived Godfrey Wharton, millionaire and septuagenarian. For two years he had been husband to one of the prettiest, gayest young women in the city, and in the latter days of this responsibility he was not a happy man. His wife had fallen desperately, even conspicuously, in love with Everett Havens, the new leading man at one of the fashionable play-houses. The affair had been going on for weeks, and it had at last become the talk of the town. By "the town" is meant that vague, expansive thing known as the "Four Hundred." Sam

Rossiter, two years out of Yale, was an attachment to, but not a component part of, the Four Hundred. The Whartons were of the inner circle.

Young Rossiter was ambitious. He was, besides, keen, aggressive and determined to do well for himself. Entering the great law offices of Grover & Dickhut immediately after leaving college, he devoted himself assiduously to the career in prospect. He began by making its foundation as substantial as brains and energy would permit. So earnest, so successful was he that Grover & Dickhut regarded him as the most promising young man in New York. They predicted a great future for him, no small part of which was the ultimate alteration of an office shingle, the name of Rossiter going up in gilt, after that of Dickhut. And, above all, Rossiter was a handsome, likable chap. Tall, fair, sunny-hearted, well groomed, he was a fellow that both sexes liked without much effort.

The Wharton trouble was bound to prove startling any way one looked at it. The prominence of the family, the baldness of its skeleton and the gleeful eagerness with which it danced into full view, left but little for meddlers to covet. A crash was inevitable; it was the *clash* that Grover & Dickhut were trying to avert. Old Wharton, worn to a slimmer frazzle than he had ever been before his luckless marriage, was determined to divorce his insolent younger half. It was to be done with as little noise as possible, more for his own sake than for hers. Wharton was proud in, not of, his weakness.

It became necessary to "shadow" the fair debutante in matrimony.

After weeks of indecision Mr. Wharton finally arose and swore in accents terrible that she was going too far to be called back. He determined to push, not to pull, on the reins. Grover & Dickhut were commanded to get the "evidence"; he would pay. When he burst in upon them and cried in his cracked treble that "the devil's to pay," he did not mean to cast any aspersion upon the profession in general or particular. He was annoyed.

"She's going away next week," he exclaimed, as if the lawyers were to blame for it.

"Well, and what of it?" asked Mr. Grover blandly.

"Up into the mountains," went on Mr. Wharton triumphantly.

"Is it against the law?" smiled the old lawyer.

"Confound the law! I don't object to her going up into the mountains for a rest, but——"

"It's much too hot in town for her, I fancy."

"How's that?" querulously. "But I've just heard that that scoundrel Havens is going to the mountains also."

"The same mountain?"

"Certainly. I have absolute proof of it. Now, something has to be done!"

And so it was that the promising young lawyer, Samuel W. Rossiter, Jr., was sent northward into the Adirondacks one hot summer day with instructions to be tactful but thorough. He had never seen Mrs. Wharton, nor had he seen Havens. There was no time to look up these rather important details, for he was off to intercept her at the little station from which one drove by coach to the quiet summer hotel among the clouds. She was starting the same afternoon. He found himself wondering whether this petted butterfly of fashion had ever seen him, and, seeing him, had been sufficiently interested to inquire, "Who is that tall fellow with the light hair?" It would be difficult to perform the duties assigned to him if either she or Havens knew him for what he was. His pride would have been deeply wounded if he had known that Grover & Dickhut

recommended him to Wharton as "obscure."

"They say she is a howling beauty as well as a swell," reflected Rossiter, as the miles and minutes went swinging by. "And that's something to be thankful for. One likes novelty, especially if it's feminine. Well, I'm out for the sole purpose of saving a million or so for old Wharton and to save as much of her reputation as I can besides. With the proof in hand the old duffer can scare her out of any claim against his bank account, and she shall have the absolute promise of 'no exposure' in return. Isn't it lovely? Well, here's Albany. Now for the dinky road up to Fossingford Station. I have an hour's wait here. She's coming on the afternoon train and gets to Fossingford at eleven-ten tonight. That's a dickens of a time for a young woman to be arriving anywhere, to say nothing of Fossingford."

Loafing about the depot at Albany, Rossiter kept a close lookout for Mrs. Wharton as he pictured her from the description he carried in his mind's eye. Her venerable husband informed him that she was sure to wear a white shirt waist, a gray skirt and a sailor hat, because her maid had told him so in a huff. But he was to identify her chiefly by means of a handsome and oddly trimmed parasol of deep purple. Wharton had every reason to suspect that it was a present from Havens and therefore to be carried more for sentiment than protection.

A telegram awaited him at Fossingford Station. Fossingford was so small and unsophisticated that the arrival of a telegraphic message that did not relate to the movement of railroad trains was an "occasion." Everybody in town knew that a message had come for Samuel Rossiter and everybody was at the depot to see that he got it. The station agent had inquired at the "eating-house" for the gentleman, and that was enough. With the eyes of a Fossingford score or two upon him, Rossiter read the despatch from Grover & Dickhut.

"Too bad, ain't it?" asked the agent, compassionately regarding the newcomer. Evidently the contents were supposed to be disappointing.

"Oh, I don't know," replied Rossiter easily. Nevertheless he was troubled in mind as he walked over and sat down upon his steamer trunk in the shade of the building. The telegram read:

She left New York five-thirty this evening. Stops overnight Albany. Fossingford tomorrow morning. Watch trains. Purple parasol. Sailor hat. Gray traveling suit.

G. & D.

This meant that he would be obliged to stay in Fossingford all night—but where? A general but comprehensive glance did not reveal anything that looked like a hotel. He thought of going back to Albany for the night, but it suddenly occurred to him that she might not stop in that city, after all. Pulling his wits together, he saw things with a new clearness of vision. Ostensibly she had announced her intention to spend the month at Eagle Nest, an obscure but delightful hotel in the hills, but did that really mean that she would go there? It was doubtless a ruse to throw the husband off the track. There were scores of places in the mountains, and it was more than probable that she would give Eagle Nest a wide berth. Rossiter patted his bump of perceptiveness and smiled serenely until he came plump up against the realization that she might not come by way of Fossingford at all, or, in any event, she might go whisking through to some station farther north. His speculations came to an end in the shape of a distressing resolution. He would remain in Fossingford and watch the trains go by!

After he had dashed through several early evening trains, the cheerful, philosophical smile of courage left his face and trouble stared from his eyes. He saw awkward prospects ahead. Suppose she were to pass through on one of the late night trains! He could not rush through the sleepers, even though the trains stopped in

Fossingford for water. Besides, she could not be identified by means of a gray suit, a sailor hat and a purple parasol if they were tucked away in the berth. At eleven o'clock he was pacing the little depot platform, waiting for the eleven-ten train, the last he was to inspect for the night. He had eaten a scanty meal at the restaurant nearby and was still mad about it. The station agent slept soundly at his post, and all the rest of the town had gone to bed.

The train pulled in and out again, leaving him at the far end of the platform, mopping his harassed brow. He had visited the chair-cars and had seen no one answering the description. A half-dozen passengers huddled off and wandered away in the darkness.

"I'll bet my head she's in one of those sleepers," he groaned, as he watched the lights on the rear coach fade away into the night. "It's all off till tomorrow, that's settled. My only hope is that she really stopped in Albany. There's a train through here at three in the morning, but I'm not detective enough to unravel the mystery of any woman's berth. Now, where the deuce am I to sleep?"

As he looked about dismally, disconsolately, his hands deep in his pockets, his straw hat pulled low over his sleepy eyes, the station agent came up to him with a knowing grin on his face.

"Scuse me, boss, but she's come," he said, winking.

"She? Who?"

"Her. The young lady. Sure! She's lookin' fer you over in the wait-in'-room. You mus' 'a' missed her when she got off—thought she wasn't comin' up till tomorrer. Mus' 'a' changed her mind. That's a woming all over, ain't it?"

Rossiter felt himself turn hot and cold. His head began to whirl and his courage went fluttering away. Here was a queer complication. The quarry hunting for the sleuth, instead of the reverse. He fanned himself with his hat for one brief, uncertain moment, dazed beyond belief. Then

he resolutely strode over to face the situation, trusting to luck to keep him from blundering his game into her hands. Just as he was about to put his foot upon the lamp-lit door-sill the solution struck him like a blow. She was expecting Havens to meet her!

There was but one woman in the room, and she was approaching the door with evident impatience as he entered. Both stopped short, she with a look of surprise which changed to annoyance and then crept into a nervous, apologetic little smile; he with an unsuppressed ejaculation. She wore a gray skirt, a white waist and a sailor hat, and she was surpassingly good to look at even in the trying light from the overhead lamp. Instinctively his eye swept over her. She carried on her arm the light gray jacket, and in one hand was the tightly rolled parasol of—he impertinently craned his neck to see—of purple! Mr. Rossiter was face to face with the woman he was to dog for a month, and he was flabbergasted. Even as he stopped, puzzled, before her, contemplating retreat, she spoke to him.

"Did that man send you to me?" she asked nervously, looking through the door beyond and then through a window at his right, quite puzzled, he could see.

"He did, and I was sure he was mistaken. I knew of no one in this God-forsaken place who could be asking for me," said he, collecting his wits carefully and herding them into that one sentence. "But perhaps I can help you. Will you tell me whom I am to look for?"

"It is strange he is not here," she said a little breathlessly. "I wired him just what train to expect me on."

"Your husband?" ventured he admiringly.

"Oh, dear, no!" said she quickly.

"I wish she'd wired me what train to expect her on," thought he grimly. "She doesn't know me. That's good. She was expecting Havens and he's missed connections somehow," shot rapidly through his brain. At the

same time he was thinking of her as the prettiest woman he had seen in all his life. Then aloud: "I'll look on the platform. Maybe he's lost in this great city. What name shall I call out?"

"Please don't call very loudly. You'll wake the dead," she said, with a pathetic smile. "It's awfully good of you. He may come at any minute, you know. His name is—is"—she hesitated for a second, and then went on determinedly—"Dudley. Tall, dark man. I don't know how I shall thank you. It's so very awkward."

Rossiter darted from her glorious but perplexed presence. He had never seen Havens, but he was sure he could recognize an actor if he saw him in Fossingford. And he would call him Dudley, too. It would be wise. The search was fruitless. The only tall, dark object he saw was the mail-crane at the edge of the platform, but he facetiously asked if its name was Dudley. Receiving no answer, he turned back to cast additional woe into the heart of the pretty intriguer. She was standing in the door, despair in her eyes. Somehow he was pleased because he had not found the wretch. She was so fair to look upon and so appealing in her distress.

"You couldn't find him? What am I to do? Oh, isn't it awful? He promised to be here."

"Perhaps he's at a hotel."

"In Fossingford?" in deep disgust. "There's no hotel here. He was to drive me to the home of a friend out in the country." Rossiter leaned against the wall suddenly. There was a long silence. He could not find his tongue, but his eyes were burning deep into the plaintive blue ones that looked up into his face.

"I'll ask the agent," he said at last.

"Ask him what?" she cried anxiously.

"If he's been here. No, I'll ask if there's a place where you can sleep tonight. Mr. Dudley will surely turn up tomorrow."

"But I couldn't sleep a wink. I feel like crying my eyes out," she wailed.

"Don't do that!" exclaimed he, in alarm. "I'll take another look outside."

"Please don't. He is not here. Will you please tell me what I am to do?"—very much as if it was his business to provide for her in the hour of need.

Rossiter promptly wakened the agent and asked him where a room could be procured for the lady. Doxie's boarding-house was the only place, according to the agent, and it was full to overflowing. Besides, they would not "take in" strange women.

"She can sleep here in the waiting-room," suggested the agent. "They'll let you sleep in the parlor over at Doxie's, mister—maybe."

Rossiter did not have the heart to tell her all that the agent said. He merely announced that there was no hotel except the depot waiting-room.

"By the way, does Mr. Dudley live out in the country?" he asked insidiously. She flushed and then looked at him narrowly.

"No. He's visiting his uncle up here."

"Funny he missed you."

"It's terribly annoying," she said coldly. Then she walked away from him as if suddenly conscious that she should not be conversing with a good-looking stranger at such a time and place and under such peculiar circumstances. He withdrew to the platform and his own reflections.

"He's an infernal cad for not meeting her," he found himself saying, her pretty, distressed face still before him. "I don't care a rap whether she's doing right or wrong—she's game. Still, she's a blamed little fool to be traveling up here on such an outlandish train. So he's visiting an uncle, eh? Then the chances are they're not going to Eagle Nest. Lucky I waited here—I'd have lost them entirely if I'd gone back to Albany. But where the deuce is she to sleep till morn—?" He heard rapid footsteps behind him and turned to distinguish Mrs. Wharton as she ap-

proached dimly but gracefully. The air seemed full of her.

"Oh, Mr.—Mr.—" she was saying eagerly.

"Rollins."

"Isn't there a later train, Mr. Rollins?"

"I'll ask the agent."

"There's the flyer at three-thirty A.M.," responded the sleepy agent a minute later.

"I'll just sit up and wait for it," she said coolly. "He has got the trains confused."

"Good heavens! Till three-thirty?"

"But my dear Mr. Rollins, you won't be obliged to sit up, you know. You're not expecting anyone, are you?"

"N-no, of course not."

"By the way, why *are* you staying up?" He was sure he detected alarm in the question. She was suspecting him!

"I have nowhere to go, Miss—Mrs.—er—" She merely smiled and he said something under his breath. "I'm waiting for the eight o'clock train."

"How lovely! What time will the three-thirty train get here, agent?"

"At half-past three, I reckon. But she don't stop here."

"Oh, goodness! Can't you flag it—her, I mean?"

"What's the use?" asked Rossiter. "He's not coming on it, is he?"

"That's so. He's coming in a buggy. You needn't mind flagging her, agent."

"Well, say, I'd like to lock up the place," grumbled the agent. "There's no more trains tonight but Number Seventeen, and she don't even whistle here. I can't set up here all night."

"Oh, you wouldn't lock me out in the night, would you?" she cried, in such pretty despair that he faltered.

"I got to git home to my wife. She's—"

"That's all right, agent," broke in Rossiter hastily. "I'll take your place as agent. Leave the doors open and I'll go on watch. I have to stay up anyway."

There was a long silence. He did

not know whether she was freezing or warming toward him, because he dared not look into her eyes.

"I don't know who you are," she said distinctly but plaintively. It was very dark out there on the platform and the night air was growing cold.

"It is the misfortune of obscurity," he said mockingly. "I am a most humble wayfarer on his way to the high hills. If it will make you feel any more comfortable, madam, I will say that I don't know who you are. So, you see, we are in the same boat. You are waiting for a man and I am waiting for daylight. I sincerely trust you may not have as long to wait as I. Believe me, I regard myself as a gentleman. You are quite as safe with me as you will be with the agent, or with Mr.—Mr. Dudley, for that matter."

"You may go home to your wife, Mr. Agent," she said promptly. "Mr. Rollins will let the trains through, I'm sure."

The agent stalked away in the night and the diminutive station was left to the mercy of the wayfarers.

"And now, Mr. Rollins, you may go over in that corner and stretch out on the bench. It will be springless, I know, but I fancy you can sleep. I will call you for the—for breakfast."

"I'm hanged if you do. On the contrary, I'm going to do my best to fix a comfortable place for you to take a nap. I'll call you when Mr. Dudley comes."

"It's most provoking of him," she said, as he began rummaging through his steamer trunk. "What are you doing?"

"Hunting out something to make over into a mattress. You don't mind napping on my clothes, do you? Here's a soft suit of flannels, a heavy suit of cheviot, a dress suit, a spring coat and a raincoat. I can rig up a downy couch in no time if——"

"Ridiculous! Do you imagine that I'm going to sleep on your best clothes? I'm going to sit up."

"You'll have to do as I say, madam,

or be turned out of the hotel," said he, with an infectious grin.

"But I insist upon your lying down. You have no reason for doing this for me. Besides, I'm going to sit up. Good night!"

"You are tired and ready to cry," he said, calmly going on with his preparations. She stood off defiantly and watched him pile his best clothes into a rather comfortable-looking heap on one of the long benches. "Now, if you don't mind, I'll make a pillow of these negligee shirts. They're soft, you know."

"Stop! I refuse to accept your—" she was protesting.

"Do you want me to leave you here all alone?" he demanded. "With the country full of tramps and——"

"Don't! It's cowardly of you to frighten me. They say the railroads are swarming with tramps, too. Won't you please go and see if Mr. Dudley is anywhere in sight?"

"It was mean of me, I confess. Please lie down. It's getting cold. Pull this raincoat over yourself. I'll walk out and——"

"Oh, but you are a determined person. And very foolish, too. Why should you lose a lot of sleep just for me when——?"

"There is no reason why two men should fail you tonight, Mrs.—Miss——"

"Miss Dering," she said, humbled.

"When you choose to retire, Miss Dering, you will find your room quite ready," he said, with fine gallantry, bowing low as he stood in the doorway. "I will be just outside on the platform, so don't be uneasy."

He quickly faded into the night, leaving her standing there, petulant, furious, yet with admiration in her eyes. Ten minutes later he heard her call. She was sitting on the edge of the improvised couch, smiling sweetly, even timidly.

"It must be cold out there. You must wear this."

She came toward him, the raincoat in one hand, the purple parasol in the other. He took the parasol only and

departed without a word. She gasped and would have called after him, but there was no use. With a perplexed frown and smile she went slowly, dubiously toward the folded bed.

Rossiter smoked three cigars and walked two miles up and down the platform, swinging the parasol absent-mindedly, before he ventured to look inside the room again. In that time he had asked and answered many questions in his mind. He saw that it would be necessary to change his plans if he was to watch her successfully. She evidently gave out Eagle Nest to blind her husband. Somehow he was forgetting that the task before him was disagreeable and undignified. What troubled him most was how to follow them if Havens—or Dudley—put in an appearance for the three-thirty train. He began to curse Everett Havens softly but potently.

When he looked into the waiting-room she was sound asleep on the bench. It delighted him to see that she had taken him at his word and was lying upon his clothes. Cautiously he took a seat on the door-sill. The night was as still as death and as lonesome as the grave. For half an hour he sat gazing upon the tired, pretty face and the lithe young figure of the sleeper. He found himself dreaming, although he was wide awake—never more so. It occurred to him that he would be immensely pleased to hear that Havens's reason for failing her was due to an accident in which he had been killed.

"Those clothes will have to be pressed the first thing tomorrow," he said to himself, but without a trace of annoyance. "Hang it all, she doesn't look like that sort of woman," his mind switched. "But just think of being tied up to an old crocodile like Wharton! Gee! One oughtn't to blame her!"

Then he went forth into the night once more and listened for the sound of buggy wheels. It was almost time for the arrival of the belated man from the country, and he was beginning to pray that he would not appear at all. It came to his mind that he should ad-

vise her to return to New York in the morning. At last his watch told him that the train was due to pass in five minutes. And still no buggy! Good! He felt an exhilaration that threatened to break into song.

Softly he stole back into the waiting-room, prepared to awaken her before the train shot by. Something told him that the rumble and roar would terrify her if she were asleep. Going quite close to her he bent forward and looked long and sadly upon the perfect face. Her hair was somewhat disarranged, her hat had a very hopeless tilt, her lashes swept low over the smooth cheek, but there was an almost imperceptible choke in her breathing. In her small white hand she clasped a handkerchief tightly, and—yes, he was sure of it—there were tear-stains beneath her lashes. There came to him the faint sob which lingers long in the breath of one who has cried herself to sleep. The spy passed his hand over his brow, sighed, shook his head and turned away irresolutely. He remembered that she was waiting for a man who was not her husband.

Far down the track a bright star came shooting toward Fossingford. He knew it to be the headlight of the flyer. With a breath of relief he saw that he was the only human being on the platform. Havens had failed again. This time he approached the recumbent one determinedly. She was awake the instant he touched her shoulder.

"Oh," she murmured, sitting erect and looking about, bewildered. "Is it—has he—oh, you are still here? Has he come?"

"No, Miss Dering, he is not here," and added, under his breath, "damn him!" Then aloud, "The train is coming."

"And he didn't come?" she almost wailed.

"I fancy you'd better try to sleep until morning. There's nothing to stay awake for," although it came with a pang.

"Absolutely nothing," she murmured, and his pride took a respectful tumble. As she began to rearrange

her hair, rather clumsily spoiling a charming effect, he remonstrated.

"Don't bother about your hair." She looked at him in wonder for an instant, a little smile finally creeping to her lips. He felt that she understood something. "Maybe he'll come, after all," he added quickly.

"What are you doing with my parasol?" she asked sleepily.

"I'm carrying it to establish your identity with Dudley if he happens to come. He'll recognize the purple parasol, you know."

"Oh, I see," she said dubiously. "He gave it to me for a birthday present."

"I knew it," he muttered.

"What?"

"I mean I knew he'd recognize it," he explained.

The flyer shot through Fossingford at that juncture, a long line of roaring shadows. There was silence between them until the rumble was lost in the distance.

"If you don't mind, I'd like to go out on the platform for awhile," she said finally, resignation in her eyes. "Perhaps he's out there, wondering why the train didn't stop."

"It's cold out there. Just slip into my coat, Miss Dering." He held the raincoat for her, and she mechanically slipped her arms into the sleeves. She shivered, but smiled sweetly up at him.

"Thank you, Mr. Rollins, you are very thoughtful and very kind to me."

They walked out into the darkness. After a turn or two in silence she took the arm he proffered. He admired the bravery with which she was trying to convince him that she was not so bitterly disappointed. When she finally spoke her voice was soft and cool, just as a woman's always is before the break.

"He was to have taken me to his uncle's house, six miles up in the country. His aunt and a young lady from the South, with Mr. Dudley and me, are to go to Eagle Nest tomorrow for a month."

"How very odd," he said, with well-

assumed surprise. "I, too, am going to Eagle Nest for a month or so."

She stopped stock-still, and he could feel that she was staring at him hardly.

"You are going there?" she half whispered.

"They say it is a quiet, restful place," he said. "One reaches it by stage overland, I believe." She was strangely silent during the remainder of the walk. Somehow he felt amazingly sorry for her. "I hope I may see something of you while we are there," he said at last.

"I imagine I couldn't help it if I were to try," she said. They were in the path of the light from the window, and he saw the strange little smile on her face. "I think I'll lie down again. Won't you find a place to sleep, Mr. Rollins? I can't bear the thought of depriving you——"

"I am the slave of your darkness," he said gravely.

She left him, and he lit another cigar. Daylight came at last to break up his thoughts, and then his tired eyes began to look for the man and buggy. Fatigued and weary, he sat upon his steamer trunk, his back to the wall. There he fell sound asleep.

He was awakened by someone shaking him gently by the shoulder.

"You are a very sound sleeper, Mr. Rollins," said a familiar voice, but it was gay and sprightly. He looked up blankly, and it was a full half-minute before he could get his bearings.

A young woman with a purple parasol stood beside him, laughing merrily, and at her side was a tall, dark, very good-looking young man.

"I couldn't go without saying good-bye to you, Mr. Rollins, and thanking you again for the care you have taken of me," she was saying. He finally saw the little gloved hand that was extended toward him. Her companion was carrying her jacket and the little traveling-bag.

"Oh — er — good-bye, and don't mention it," he stammered, struggling to his feet. "Was I asleep?"

"Asleep at your post, sir. Mr.

Dudley—oh, this is Mr. Dudley, Mr. Rollins—came in ten minutes ago and found—us—both—asleep.”

“Isn’t it lucky Mr. Dudley happens to be an honest man?” said Rossiter, in a manner so strange that the smile froze on the face of the other man. The unhappy barrister caught the quick glance that passed between them, and was vaguely convinced that they had been discussing him while he slept. Something whispered to him that they had guessed the nature of his business.

“My telegram was not delivered to him until this morning. Wasn’t it provoking?” she was saying.

“What time is it now?” asked Rossiter.

“Half-past seven,” responded Dudley rather shortly. His black eyes were fastened steadily upon those of the questioner. “Mr. Van Haltford’s man came in and got Miss Dering’s telegram yesterday, but it was not delivered to me until a neighbor came to the house with both the message and messenger in charge. Joseph had drunk all the whisky in Fossingford.”

“Then there’s no chance for me to get a drink, I suppose,” said Rossiter, with a wry smile.

“Do you need one?” asked Miss Dering saucily.

“I have a headache.”

“A pick-me-up is what you want,” said Dudley coldly.

“My dear sir, I haven’t been drunk,” remonstrated Rossiter sharply. His hearers laughed and he turned red but cold with resentment.

“See, Mr. Rollins, I have smoothed out your clothes and folded them,” she said, pointing to her one-time couch. “I couldn’t pack them in your trunk because you were sitting on it. Shall I help you now?”

“No, I thank you,” he said ungraciously. “I can toss ’em in any old way.”

He set about doing it without another word. His companions stood over near the window and conversed earnestly in words too low for him to

distinguish. From the corner of his eye he could see that Dudley’s face was hard and uncompromising, while hers was eager and imploring. The man was stubbornly objecting to something, and she was just as decided in an opposite direction.

“He’s finding fault and she’s trying to square it with him. Oh, my beauties, you’ll have a hard time to shake off one Samuel Rossiter. They’re suspicious—or he is, at least. Someone has tipped me off to them, I fancy.”

“I’m sorry they are so badly mussed, Mr. Rollins, but they did make a very comfortable bed,” she said, walking over to him. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were gleaming. “You are going to Eagle Nest today?”

“Just as soon as I can get a conveyance. There is a stage-coach at nine, Miss Dering.”

“We will have room for you on our break,” she said simply. Her eyes met his bravely and then wavered. Rossiter’s heart gave a mighty leap.

“Permit me to second Miss Dering’s invitation,” said Dudley, coming over. The suggestion of a frown on his face made Rossiter only too eager to accept the unexpected invitation. “My aunt and Miss Crozier are outside with the coachman. You can have your luggage sent over in the stage. It is fourteen miles by road, so we should be under way, Mr. Rollins.”

As Rossiter followed them across the platform he was saying to himself:

“Well, the game’s on! Here’s where I begin to earn my salary. I’ll hang out my sign when I get back to New York: ‘Police Spying. Satisfaction guaranteed. References given.’ Hang it all, I hate to do this to her. She’s an awfully good sort and—and— But I don’t like this damned Havens!”

Almost before he knew it he was being presented to two handsome, fashionably dressed young women who sat together in the rear seat of the big mountain break.

“Every cloud has its silver lining,” Miss Dering was saying. “Let me present you to Mr. Dudley’s aunt, Mrs.

Van Haltford, and to Miss Crozier, Mr. Rollins."

In a perfect maze of emotions, he found himself bowing before the two ladies, who smiled distantly and uncertainly. Dudley's aunt? That dashing young creature his aunt? Rossiter was staggered by the boldness of the claim. He could scarce restrain the scornful, brutal laugh of derision at this ridiculous play upon his credulity. To his secret satisfaction he discovered that the entire party seemed nervous and ill at ease. There was a trace of confusion in their behavior. He heard Miss Dering explain that he was to accompany the party and he saw the poorly concealed look of disapproval and polite inquiry that went between the two ladies and Dudley. There was nothing for it, however, now that Miss Dering had committed herself, and he was advised to look to his luggage without delay.

He hurried into the station to arrange for the transportation of his trunk by stage, all the while smiling maliciously in his sleeve. Looking surreptitiously from a window he saw the quartet, all of them now on the break, arguing earnestly over—him, he was sure. Miss Dering was plaintively facing the displeasure of the trio. The coachman's averted face wore a half-grin. The discussion ended abruptly as Rossiter reappeared, but there was a coldness in the air that did not fail to impress him as portentous.

"I'm the elephant on their hands—the proverbial hot coal," he thought wickedly. "Well, they've got to bear it even if they can't grin." Then aloud cheerily: "All aboard! We're off!" He took his seat beside the driver.

## II

THE events of the ensuing week are best chronicled by the reproduction of Rossiter's own diary or report, with liberties in the shape of an author's comments:

### THURSDAY.

"Settled comfortably in Eagle Nest House. Devilish rugged and out-of-the-way place. Mrs. Van Haltford is called Aunt Josephine. She and Miss Debby Crozier have rooms on the third floor. Mine is next to theirs, Havens's is next to mine and Mrs. Wharton has two rooms beyond his. We are not unlike a big family party. They're rather nice to me. I go walking with Aunt Josephine. I don't understand why I'm sandwiched in between Havens and Aunt Josephine. Otherwise the arrangement is neat. There is a veranda outside our windows. We sit upon it. Aunt Josephine is a great bluff, but she's clever. She's never napping. I've tried to pump her. Miss Crozier is harmless. She doesn't care. Havens never takes his eyes off Mrs. W. when they are together. She looks at him a good bit, too. They don't pay much attention to me. Aunt Josephine's husband is very old and very busy. He can't take vacations. Everybody went to bed early tonight. No evidence today."

### FRIDAY NIGHT.

"Havens and Mrs. W. went hill-climbing this afternoon and were gone for an hour before I missed them. Then I took Aunt Jo and Debby out for a quick climb. Confound Aunt Jo! She got tired in ten minutes and Debby wouldn't go on without her. I think it was a put-up job. The others didn't return till after six. She asked me if I'd like to walk about the grounds after dinner. Said I would. We did. Havens went with us. Couldn't shake him to save my life."

### SATURDAY NIGHT.

"I have to watch myself constantly to keep from calling her Mrs. Wharton. I believe writing her real name is bad policy. It makes me forget. After this I shall call her Miss Dering, and I'll speak of him as Dudley. This morning he asked me to call him 'Jim.' He calls me 'Sam.' Actors do get familiar. When she came downstairs to go driving with him this morning I'll swear she was the prettiest thing I

ever saw. They took a lunch and were gone for hours. I'd like to punch his face. She was very quiet all evening, and I fancied she avoided me. I smelt liquor on his breath just before bedtime.

"One A.M.—I thought everybody had gone to bed, but they are out there on the veranda talking, just outside her windows. I distinctly heard him call her 'dearest.' Something must have alarmed them, for they parted abruptly. He walked the veranda for an hour, all alone. Plenty of evidence."

#### SUNDAY NIGHT.

"For appearance's sake he took Miss Crozier for a walk today. I went to the chapel down the hill with Miss Dering and Aunt Josephine. Aunt Josephine put a ten-dollar bill in the box. Thinks she's squaring herself with the Lord, I suppose. Miss Dering was not at all talkative and gave every sign of being uncomfortable because he had the audacity to go walking with another girl. In the afternoon she complained of being ill and went to her room. Later on she sent for Dudley and Mrs. Van Haltford. They were in her room all afternoon. I smoked on the terrace with Debby. She is the most uninteresting girl I ever met. But she's up to their game. I know it because she forgot herself once, when I mentioned Miss Dering's illness, and said: 'Poor girl! She is in a most trying position. Don't you think Mr. Dudley is a splendid fellow?' I said that he was very good-looking, and she seemed to realize she had said something she ought not to have said and shut up. I'm sorry she's sick, though. I miss that parasol dreadfully. She always has it, and I can see her a mile away. Usually he carries it, though. Well, I suppose he has a right—as original owner. Jim and I smoked together this evening, but he evidently smells a mouse. He did not talk much, and I caught him eying me strangely several times."

#### MONDAY NIGHT.

"Dudley has departed. I believe they have found me out. He went to Boston

this afternoon, and he actually was gruff with me just before leaving. The size of the matter is, someone has posted him, and they are all up to my game as a spy. I wish I were out of it. Never was so ashamed of a thing in my life; don't feel like looking anyone in the face. They've all been nice to me. But what's the difference? They're all interested. She went to the train with him and—the rest of us. I'll never forget how sad she looked as she held his hand and bade him good-bye. I carried the parasol back to the hotel, and I know I hurt her feelings when I maliciously said that it would look well with a deep black border. She almost looked a hole through me. Fine eyes. I don't know what is coming next. She is liable to slip out from under my eye at any time and fly away to meet him somewhere else. I telegraphed this message to Grover & Dickhut:

"He has gone. She still here. What shall I do?"

"Got this answer:

"Stay there and watch. They suspect you. Don't let her get away.

"But how the devil am I to watch night and day?"

The next week was rather an uneventful one for Rossiter. There was no sign of Havens and no effort on the lady's part to leave Eagle Nest.

As the days went by Rossiter became more and more vigilant. In fact, his watch was incessant and very much of a personal one. He walked and drove with her, and he invented all sorts of excuses to avoid Mrs. Van Haltford and Miss Crozier. The purple parasol and he had become almost inseparable friends. The fear that Havens might return at any time kept him in a fever of anxiety and dread. Now that he was beginning to know her for himself he could not endure the thought that she cared for another man. Strange to say, he did not think of her husband. Old Wharton had completely faded from his mind; it was Havens that he envied. He saw himself sinking into

her net, falling before her wiles, but he did not rebel.

He went to bed each night apprehensive that the next morning should find him alone and desolate at Eagle Nest, the bird flown. It hurt him to think that she would laugh over her feat of outwitting him. He was not guarding her for old Wharton now; he was in his own employ. All this time he knew it was wrong, and that she was trifling with him while the other was away. Yet he had eyes, ears and a heart like all men, and they were for none save the pretty wife of Godfrey Wharton.

He spoke to her on several occasions of Dudley and gnashed his teeth when he saw a look of sadness, even longing, come into her dark eyes. At such times he was tempted to tell her that he knew all, to confound her by charging her with guilt. But he could not collect the courage. For some unaccountable reason he held his bitter tongue. And so it was that handsome Sam Rossiter, spy and good fellow, fell in love with a woman who had a very dark page in her history.

She received mail, of course, daily, but he was not sneak enough to pry into its secrets, even had the chance presented itself. Sometimes she tossed the letters away carelessly, but he observed that there were some which she guarded jealously. Once he heard her tell Aunt Josephine that she had a letter from "Jim." He began to discover that "Jim" was a forbidden subject and that he was not discussed; at least, not in his presence. Many times he saw the two women in earnest, rather cautious conversation, and instinctively felt that Havens was the subject. Mrs. Wharton appeared piqued and discontented after these little talks. He made this entry in his diary one night, a week after Havens went away:

"I almost wish he'd come back and end the suspense. This thing is wearing on me. I was weighed today and I've lost ten pounds. Mrs. Van Haltford says I look hungry and advises me to try salt-water air. I'm hanged if

I don't give up the job this week. I don't like it, anyhow. It doesn't seem square to be down here enjoying her society, taking her walking and all that and all the time hunting up something with which to ruin her forever. I'll stick the week out, but I'm not decided whether I'll produce any evidence against her if the Wharton *vs.* Wharton case ever does come to trial. I don't believe I could. I don't want to be a sneak."

One day Rossiter and the purple parasol escorted the pretty trifter over the valley to Bald Top, half a mile from the hotel. Mrs. Van Haltford and Miss Crozier were to join them later and were to bring with them Colonel Deming and Mr. Vincent, two friends who had lately arrived. The hotel was rapidly filling with fashionable guests and Mrs. Wharton had petulantly observed, a day or two before, that the place was getting crowded and she believed she would go away soon. On the way over she said to him:

"I have about decided to go down to Velvet Springs for the rest of the month. Don't you think it is getting rather crowded here?"

"I have been pretty well satisfied," he replied, in an injured tone. "I don't see why you should want to leave here."

"Why should I stay if I am tired of the place?" she asked demurely, casting a roguish glance at his sombre face. He clenched the parasol and grated his teeth.

"She's leading me on, confound her!" he thought. At the same time his head whirled and his heart beat a little faster. "You shouldn't," he said, "if you are tired. There's more of an attraction at Velvet Springs, I suppose."

"Have you been there?"

"No."

"You answered rather snappishly. Have you a headache?"

"Pardon me; I didn't intend to answer snappishly, as you call it. I only wanted to be brief."

"Why?"

"Because I wanted to change the subject."

"Shall we talk of the weather?"

"I suppose we may as well," he said resignedly. She was plainly laughing at him now. "Look here," he said, stopping and looking into her eyes intently and somewhat fiercely, "why do you want to go to Velvet Springs?"

"Why should you care where I go?" she answered blithely, although her eyes wavered.

"It's because you are unhappy here and because someone else is there. I'm not blind, Mrs.—Miss Dering."

"You have no right to talk to me in that manner, Mr. Rollins. Come, we are to go back to the hotel at once," she said coldly. There was steel in her eyes.

He met her contemptuous look for a moment and quailed.

"I beg your pardon. I am a fool, but you have made me such," he said baldly.

"I? I do not understand you," and he could not but admire the clever, innocent, widespread eyes.

"You will understand me some day," he said, and to his amazement she flushed and looked away. They continued their walk, but there was a strange shyness in her manner that puzzled him.

"When is Dudley expected back here?" he asked abruptly.

She started sharply and gave him a quick, searching look. There was a guilty expression in her eyes, and he muttered something ugly under his breath.

"I do not know, Mr. Rollins," she answered.

"When did you hear from him last?" he demanded half savagely.

"I do not intend to be catechized by you, sir," she exclaimed, halting abruptly. "We shall go back. You are very ugly today and I am surprised."

"I supposed you had letters from him every day," he went on ruthlessly. She gave him a look in which he saw pain and the shadow of tears, and then she turned and walked swiftly toward the hotel. His conscience smote him and he turned after her. For the

next ten minutes he was on his knees, figuratively, pleading for forgiveness. At last she paused and smiled sweetly into his face. Then she calmly turned and resumed the journey to Bald Top, saying demurely:

"We have nearly a quarter of a mile to retrace, all because you were so hateful."

"And you so obdurate," he added blissfully. He had tried to be severe and angry with her and had failed.

That very night the expected came to pass. Havens appeared on the scene, the same handsome, tragic-looking fellow, a trifle care-worn perhaps, but still—an evil genius. Rossiter ran plump into him in the hallway and was speechless for a moment. He unconsciously shook hands with the new arrival, but his ears were ringing so with the thuds of his heart that he heard but few of the brisk words addressed to him. After the eager actor had left him standing humbly in the hall he managed to recall part of what had been said. He had come up on the express from Boston and could stay but a day or two. Did Mr. Rossiter know whether Miss Dering was in her room? The barrister also distinctly remembered that he did not ask for his aunt, which would have been the perfectly natural query.

Half an hour later Havens was strolling about the grounds, under the lamp lights, in and out of dark nooks, and close beside him was a slim figure in white. Their conversation was earnest, their manner secretive; that much the harassed Rossiter could see from the balcony. His heart grew sore and he could almost feel the tears of disappointment surging to his eyes. A glance in his mirror had shown him a face haggard and drawn, eyes strange and bright. He had not slept well, he knew; he had worn himself out in this despicable watch; he had grown to care for the creature he had been hired to spy upon. No wonder he was haggard.

Now he was jealous—madly, fiendishly jealous. In his heart there was the savage desire to kill the other man

and to denounce the woman. Pacing the grounds about the hotel, he soon worked himself into a fever, devilish in its hotness. More than once he passed them, and it was all he could do to refrain from springing upon them. At length he did what most men do: he took a drink. Whisky flew down his throat and to his brain. In his mind's eye he saw her in the other's arms—and he could bear it no longer! Rushing to his room, he threw himself on the bed and cursed.

"Good heaven! I love her! I love her better than all the world! I can't stay here and see any more of it! By thunder, I'll go back to New York and they can go to the devil! So can old Wharton! And so can Grover & Dickhut!"

He leaped to his feet, dashed headlong to the telegraph office downstairs, and ten minutes later this message was flying to Grover & Dickhut:

Get someone else for this job. I'm done with it. Coming home.—SAM.

"I'm coming on the first train, too," muttered the sender, as he hurried upstairs. "I can pack my trunk for the night stage. I'd like to say good-bye to her, but I can't—I couldn't stand it. What's the difference? She won't care whether I go or stay—rather have me go. If I were to meet her now I'd—yes, by George—kiss her! It's wrong to love her, but——"

There was nothing dignified about the manner in which big Sam Rossiter packed his trunk. He fairly stamped the clothing into it and did a lot of other absurd things. When he finally locked it and yanked out his watch his brow was wet and he was trembling. It had taken just five minutes to do the packing. His hat was on the back of his head, his collar was melting, and his cigar was chewed to a pulp. Cane and umbrella were yanked from behind the door and he was ready to fly. The umbrella made him think of a certain parasol, and his heart grew still and cold with the knowledge that he was never to carry it again.

"I hope I don't meet any of 'em,"

he muttered, pulling himself together and rushing into the hall. A porter had already jerked his trunk down the stair steps.

As he hastened after it he heard the swish of skirts and detected in the air a familiar odor, the subtle scent of a perfume that he could not forget were he to live a thousand years. The next moment she came swiftly around a corner in the hall, hurrying to her rooms. They met and both started in surprise, her eyes falling to his traveling-bag, and then lifting to his face in bewilderment. He checked his hurried flight and she came quite close to him. The lights in the hall were dim and the elevator car had dropped to regions below.

"Where are you going?" she asked, in some agitation.

"I am going back to New York," he answered, controlling himself with an effort. She was so beautiful, there in the dim hallway.

"Tonight?" she asked, in very low tones.

"In half an hour."

"And were you going without saying good-bye to—to us?" she went on rapidly.

He looked steadily down into her solemn eyes for a moment and an expression of pain, of longing, came into his own.

"It couldn't make any difference whether I said good-bye to you, and it would have been hard," he replied unsteadily.

"Hard? I don't understand you," she said.

"I didn't want to see you. Yes, I hoped to get away before you knew anything about it. Maybe it was cowardly, but it was the best way," he added bitterly.

"What do you mean?" she cried, and he detected alarm, confusion, guilt in her manner.

"You know what I mean. I know everything—I knew it before I came here, before I saw you. It's why I am here, I'm ashamed to say. But have no fear—have no fear! I've given up the job—the nasty job—and you can do as you please. The only trouble is

that I have been caught in the web; I've been trapped myself. You've made me care for you. That's why I'm giving it all up. Don't look so frightened—I'll promise to keep your secret."

Her eyes were wide, her lips parted, but no words came; she seemed to shrink from him as if he were the headsman and she his victim.

"I'll do it, right or wrong!" he gasped suddenly. And in an instant his satchel clattered to the floor and his arms were straining the slight figure to his breast. Burning lips met hers and sealed them tight. She shivered violently, struggled for an instant in his mad embrace, but made no outcry. Gradually her free arm stole upward and around his neck and her lips responded to the passion in his. His kiss of ecstasy was returned. The thrill of joy that shot through him was almost overpowering. A dozen times he kissed her. Unbelieving, he held her from him and looked hungrily into her eyes. They were wet with tears.

"Why do you go? I love you!" she whispered faintly.

Then came the revulsion. With an oath he threw her from him. Her hands went to her temples and a moan escaped her lips.

"Bah!" he snarled. "Get away from me! Heaven forgive me for being as weak as I've been tonight!"

"Sam!" she wailed piteously.

"Don't tell me anything! Don't try to explain! Be honest with one man, at least!"

"You must be insane!" she cried tremulously.

"Don't play innocent, madam. I know." In abject terror, she shrank away from him. "But I have kissed you! If I live a thousand years I shall not forget its sweetness."

He waved his hands frantically above her, grabbed up his suit-case and traps, and, with one last look at the petrified woman shrinking against the wall under the blasts of his vituperation, he dashed for the stairway. And so he left her, a forlorn, crushed figure.

Blindly he tore downstairs and to the counter. He hardly knew what he

was doing as he drew forth his pocket-book to pay his account.

"Going away, Mr. Rollins?" inquired the clerk, glancing at the clock. It was eleven-twenty and the last stage-coach left for Fossingford at eleven-thirty, in time to catch the seven o'clock down train.

"Certainly," was the excited answer.

"A telegram came a few moments ago for you, sir, but I thought you were in bed," and the other tossed a little envelope out to him. Mechanically Rossiter tore it open. He was thinking of the cowering woman in the hallway and he was cursing himself for his brutality.

He read the despatch with dizzy eyes and drooping jaw, once, twice, thrice. Then he leaned heavily against the counter and a coldness assailed his heart, so bitter that he felt his blood freezing. It read:

What have you been doing? The people you were sent to watch sailed for Europe ten days ago.

GROVER & DICKHUT.

The paper fell from his trembling fingers, but he regained it, natural instinct inspiring a fear that the clerk would read it.

"Good Lord!" he gasped.

"Bad news, Mr. Rollins?" asked the clerk sympathetically, but the stricken, bewildered man did not answer.

What did it mean? A vast faintness attacked him as the truth began to penetrate. Out of the whirling mystery came the astounding, ponderous realization that he had blundered, that he had wronged her, that he had accused her of— Oh, that dear, stricken figure in the hallway above!

He leaped to the staircase. Three steps at a time he flew back to the scene of the miserable tragedy. What he thought, what he felt as he rushed into the hallway can only be imagined. She was gone—heartbroken, killed! And she had kissed him and said she loved him!

A light shone through the transoms over the doors that led into her apartments. Quaking with fear, he ran down the hall and beat a violent tattoo

upon her parlor door. Again he rapped, crazed by remorse, fear, love, pity, shame and a hundred other emotions.

"Who is it?" came in stifled tones from within.

"It is I—Rossiter—I mean Rolins! I must see you—now! For pity's sake, let me in!" he cried.

"How dare you—!" she began shrilly; but he was not to be denied.

"If you don't open this door I'll kick it in!" he shouted. "I must see you!"

After a moment the door flew open and he stood facing her. She was like a queen. Her figure was as straight as an arrow, her eyes blazing. But there had been tears in them a moment before.

"Another insult!" she exclaimed, and the scorn in her voice was withering. He paused abashed, for the first time realizing that he had hurt her beyond reparation. His voice faltered and the tears flew to his eyes.

"I don't know what to say to you. It has been a mistake—a frightful mistake—and I don't know whether you'll let me explain. When I got downstairs I found this telegram and—for heaven's sake, let me tell you the wretched story. Don't turn away from me! You shall listen to me if I have to hold you!" His manner changed suddenly to the violent, imperious forcefulness of a man driven to the last resort.

"Must I call for help?" she cried, thoroughly alarmed, once more the weak woman, face to face, as she thought, with an insane man.

"I love you better than my own life, and I've hurt you terribly. I'm not crazy, Helen! But I've been a fool, and I'll go crazy if you don't give me a chance to explain."

Whether she gave the chance or no he took it, and from his eager, pleading lips raced the whole story of his connection with the Wharton affair, from first to last. He humbled himself, accused himself, ridiculed himself and wound up by throwing himself upon her mercy, uttering protestations of

the love which had really been his undoing.

She heard him through without a word. The light in her eyes changed; the fear left them and the scorn fled. Instead there grew, by stages, wonder, incredulity, wavering doubt and—joy. She understood him and she loved him! The awful horror of that meeting in the hallway was swept away like unto the transformation scene in the fairy spectacle.

When he fell upon his knee and sought to clasp her fingers in his cold hand she smiled, and, stooping over, placed both hands on his cheeks and kissed him.

What followed her kiss of forgiveness may be more easily imagined than told.

"You see it was perfectly natural for me to mistake you for Mrs. Wharton," he said, after awhile. "You had the gray jacket, the sailor hat, the purple parasol, and you are beautiful. And you'll admit that Dudley was an excellent substitute for Havens. Can't you see how easy it was to be mistaken?"

"I won't fall into easy submission. Still, I believe I could recommend you as a detective. They usually do the most unheard of things—just as you have. Poor Jim Dudley an actor! Mistaken for such a man as you say Havens is! It is even more ridiculous than that I should be mistaken for Mrs. Wharton."

"Say, I'd like to know something about Dudley. It was his confounded devotion to you that helped matters along in my mind. What is he to you?"

"He came here tonight to repeat a question that had been answered unalterably once before. You must ask no questions, dear. He is good and true, and I am his friend."

"He's a good deal better than I am, I'll wager. Why didn't you take him, Helen?"

She hesitated a moment before answering brightly:

"Perhaps it is because I have a fancy for the ridiculous."

# IDYLETTES OF THE QUEEN

By Arthur Macy

## I—HER EYES

HER eyes are bright—  
I cannot say "like stars at night,"  
Nor can I say  
"Like the Orb of Day,"  
Because such phrases are archaic.  
And if I swear  
That they compare  
With diamonds rare,  
That's too prosaic.

I've hunted my thesaurus through,  
"The Century" and "Webster," too,  
But all in vain;  
'Tis therefore plain  
That they who made these books so wise,  
Had never seen her eyes!

## II—HER GOWN

When Kate puts on her Sunday gown  
And goes to church all in her best,  
The watchful gargoyles looking down,  
Relax their most forbidding frown,  
And smile with kindly interest.

Discerning gargoyles! could I be  
One of your number looking down,  
With you I surely would agree  
And share your amiability  
At sight of Kate and Sunday gown.

## III—HER KNOWLEDGE

How much she knows no one can tell;  
But she can read and write and spell,  
Divide and multiply and add,  
And name the apples Thomas had  
When John enticed him five to sell.

For "jelly" she does not say "jell,"  
Nor horrify us with "umbrell,"  
For all of which we're very glad—  
How much she knows!

She knows the oyster by his shell,  
 Detects the newsboy by his yell,  
     Enumerates the bones in shad,  
     And thinks my poetry is bad.  
 Well! well! well! well! well! well! well! well!  
     How much she knows!

## IV—SHE

I fain would write on pleasant themes;  
     So let me prate  
     Awhile of Kate;  
 And if my rhyming effort seems  
     Uncouth or rough,  
     At any rate,  
     She's Kate,  
     And that's enough.

## V—HER LOVE

Do you love me?  
 R.S.V.P.

## VI—HER SIGH

When she utters a sigh  
     'Tis a breath from the roses,  
 And a-hovering nigh,  
 When she utters a sigh,  
 The bees wonder why  
     No garden discloses.  
 When she utters a sigh  
     'Tis a breath from the roses.

## VII—HER RING

Her ring goes round her finger—  
     Oh, foolish thing!  
     Were I a ring,  
 I'd not "go round"—I'd linger!



## ECONOMY

"HOOPLER is an economical old sport."  
     "How so?"

"Why, when he got ready to settle down he dragged his family skeleton out of the closet and set it up for a hat-rack!"

## THE SECOND MAN

By Edward Boltwood

WELL, I will say that, after all my trouble in getting a situation that winter, I did feel discouraged at sight of the Quinlevans' house. Rattock, the groom, was tooling me over from the railroad in a sleigh.

"You'll need your sealskins here in Vermont, Mr. Forley, Esquire," said he, being an aggravating lot.

"Highcrag," they called the place, and high it was, and craggy, too. The house was painted green and white and was very roomy, but squat and rambling. Big, fierce mountains were stuck up around it, except in front, where the ground sloped off half a mile or so to the river. On all sides the snow lay thick. The river looked like the shiny blue steel of a good carving-knife, and beyond it up jumped the mountains again. As for trees they were plenty, mostly pine, and the wind out of the north made them sing like everything.

Mrs. Chunn, the housekeeper, gave me my orders. Mrs. Quinlevan and her son, Mr. Mark Quinlevan, were by themselves at Highcrag. Old Chunn was the butler, but he was in town and coming up with Miss Judith for a house party over the holidays, and until then I was to be first man, though I was hired for second.

I just had time to unpack my togs before dinner, get the hang of the dining-room and pantry, and make up a little to the waitress, so that things would run smooth. Victorine was her name, and her curls nestled snug about her ears to put me in mind of Minnie, the girl in Tuxedo I was promised to.

When I went to the library to an-

nounce, old Mrs. Quinlevan gave me one look, but quite kind. Young Mr. Mark spoke a word and said he hoped I'd find enough to do. I took a notion he hadn't much use for servants. He looked like a gentleman who does for himself. He had stocky shoulders and a driving jaw, same as my great-uncle's, who was in Her Majesty's Guards and as stubborn and cranky an old strap as ever wore a V.C.

That dinner was a rather rum sort. For all his brawn Mr. Mark pecked only at fish, and there was no wine. They had coffee in the drawing-room, and when I went after the cups the madam was at the piano playing quiet little schoolgirly tunes—strange business for a gray-haired lady, but it was sort of pretty to see her.

"Forley," says Mr. Mark, smiling as he used to without moving a line of his face, "Forley, you're set up more like a middleweight than a butler."

I figured from his style that it was proper to talk free, so I thanked him and answered that I had sparred my bit.

"Aha!" says he. "Maybe you'll take me on some day."

Now, if he'd been the common run that likes blarney I'd have made some crack about how easy I'd be, and how, if he ever hit me, it would be Sunday for me, and so on, which turned out to be gospel truth, too, with that lumpy chest and that reach of his. But I only thanked him again as solemn as himself and asked him when he needed me in the morning.

"Oh, I'm used to looking out for my own things, Forley," he said.

After supper Victorine wanted to

buzz the gossip to me about Mr. Mark and his love affair, but I was that tired I was ready to turn in. I asked the cook what was Mr. Mark's rising hour.

"Half-past five," she says, "and boils his own tea."

As luck would have it, my alarm-clock never touched me, and I didn't knock at Mr. Mark's door till after six—a rank, sour morning and the house creaking with frost. Young Mr. Quinlevan was up and gone. There was an outlandish mess in his two rooms—fur clothes, moccasins, guns, camping kit, maps, and such like. The windows were open, and by the snow on the sills they had been open all night. There was only a single pair of blankets on the narrow bed. Several of my gentlemen have been hipped about fresh air, but it gave me a shiver to look at the windows and those flimsy blankets. I did my best to set things to rights and to straighten out the jumble of charts and photographs on the dressing-table, and then I went downstairs and out on the glass-closed piazza.

From the stable chimney the smoke floated straight and slow, and midway betwixt the stables and the house I saw Mr. Mark floundering over the packed drifts on snowshoes, more like a crippled duck than a human. Now, if you've been about gentlemen much, you know that they don't care to be looked at when they are making a bad job. So I was turning away, when all of a sudden he flops down on one knee and stays there stiff. I ran out, powerful cold in my house-pumps and serge jacket. Mr. Mark's face was pale, and he was gnawing his lower lip.

"Twisted my ankle," he says.

"I noticed you fall, sir," says I.

"Oh, the thing happened across the river," says he, with a grunt. "Give me a hand, Forley."

On the piazza Mr. Mark had me rub the strain, and it was swelled the size of a cricket ball. He'd been a plucky one, I can tell you, to walk from across the river with his foot in that shape, and an hour later he came into the breakfast-room with Mrs. Quinlevan as

chipper as you please. Limp? Not him.

Victorine yarned to me about this snowshoe game that had been going on every blessed morning all winter. Forenoons, she said, Mr. Mark would work in a gymnasium at the stable. Afternoons he tramped and ran along the valley, storm or shine.

"And what does he live on," says she, "but fish and mealy stuff?"

"He's in training for a match," said I; "and proper training, too, by the look of him."

"Match my grandmother!" says Victorine. "He's been writing letters to places in Canada next the North Pole. Me and the kitchenmaid looked it up on a map. Do you train for a match by sleeping under one blanket in zero weather and studying funny foreign sleds hid in the coach-house?"

"Well, my dear," says I, "if Mr. Mark should want me to valet him to the under side of Greenland, I couldn't choose better."

I hadn't been at Highcraggs a day, but, if it hadn't been for Minnie, I cross my heart I'd have made bold to ask Mr. Mark to take me with him in case he was going any journey where 'twas risky going. Fellows in service can size up gentlemen quick, and Mr. Mark was the correct card, if ever I saw it.

## II

It was my second week at the Quinlevans' that I found the Twin Rocks. I was taking a walk along the road to the station, and the air was tingly and the green hemlocks looked cheerful where they popped up out of the snow. I must have put a matter of two miles between me and our house before the road forked and a side track took off up a slice between the hills. This track wasn't beaten out, but the snow was hard as asphalt.

After awhile I lost the path and I was following just a frozen brook among the boulders and all the time the sides of the gully drew closer in and steeper and higher. Then I struck a pocket

where the brook swerved, making a little open place in the ravine. That is to say, it was open at the top and at the two gates where the brook went in and out, but it was walled in all around by regular cliffs, glary with ice, wild and lonesome. In the middle of the pocket two rocks stuck up out of the level, side by side, like a pair of twenty-foot fingers.

The minute I clapped my eyes on those rocks I knew I'd seen 'em before, which seemed foolishness, but I couldn't get the notion out of my mind.

I squeezed in between the rocks, where for a patch the size of a door-mat the ground was as bare of snow as your hand. And hugging that bare ground grew a bush with tiny yellow blossoms on it. There they were, in the middle of that ice and snow, sprouting away as brave and natural as if they were in a conservatory. I broke off a sprig and put it in my purse to send to Minnie for a memento.

### III

THAT night I finds out the secret of my thinking I'd seen the Twin Rocks before. It was a kodak photograph of them that I'd seen in a drawer of Mr. Mark's dressing-table. A small picture of a young lady was hitched to it by a sort of a thong which I judged to be the stem of some vine—maybe off of the yellow flower bush—and the young lady was that beautiful to take your breath away. Mr. Mark wasn't the spoony kind, but there, you never can tell. Judge Van Doren, that I was in service to once, was the stoniest fossil ever I knew, and he had a girl's old-fashioned Spanish slipper—well, you never can tell.

At dinner Mrs. Quinlevan read a letter to Mr. Mark.

"Judith's party has shrunk," said she. "Judith's bringing up only Bobby Collord and Mr. Imboden."

"Imboden?" says Mr. Mark, sharp like.

"Yes," says his mother. Then, more slow and hesitating, "and Miriam Eldryce."

"That will be very pleasant," says Mr. Mark. "Very pleasant indeed. Judith is so thoughtful."

"They will be here tomorrow," says Mrs. Quinlevan. She kept staring at him sorrowful, as it seemed to me.

Mr. Mark didn't go out with her after dinner, as he usually did, but he told me to fetch cognac. I set out the spirit decanters—the first I'd handled of them. Mr. Mark leaned back in his chair and looked about the room with his eyes almost shut. It was a long room, furnished very handsome in dark wood and crimson, with heavy silver set on the mantel and the sideboard, and a great crimson lamp giving a glow over the big table. Mr. Mark looked at these things and then out of the window at the snowy hills and the North Star hung atop of them like a signal light.

"Forley," he says, more to himself than to me, "you're a bit of a fighter, or I'm wrong. Did you ever run away, Forley?"

I thought he meant the boxing. "I've had to take my share of medicine, thank you, sir," I said, "but I disremember ever running away from a man, sir."

"From a woman?" said he.

"Well, sir," says I, smiling respectful at the joke, "I wouldn't give 'em that satisfaction, sir."

At that he pushes away the half tumbler of brandy he'd poured out and walks to the door and there he looks the room all over again, chucking his shoulders into his coat.

"I'll need you to pack for me to-night, Forley," he says, and so he went to his mother, and I took note of them sitting in the shine of the library fire, she patting his hand like it was a child's.

There was a to-do in the servants' hall over the house party, and talk about this Miss Eldryce, who was a young lady, according to know-all Victorine, that had thrown over Mr. Mark on account of a woman he'd been seen traveling with, and taken up with Mr. Imboden.

"And a good job for her, too,"

snarls that Rattock, "and serves Quinlevan right for a proud——"

"You hold your trap, Mr. Rattock," says I, "or I'll give you what-for, my friend."

He looked me over, and he nor anybody else never spoke to me again about Mr. Mark's fix. You see, I was beginning to get touchy about it, knowing how I'd feel myself if Minnie and I hadn't been able to hit things off.

We didn't do any packing. When I went upstairs Mr. Mark said he'd changed his mind and that we shouldn't need the boxes for a couple of days anyhow. I don't know why, but the whole business didn't make me sorry for him, but just mad and put out.

#### IV

OF course I guessed that the picture in Mr. Mark's room was of Miss Eldryce, but she was the kind that can't be photographed real on account of the coloring and the style. I've only seen three duchesses, and they were dowdy. Miss Miriam was what those duchesses ought to have been, rolled into one. The oddest thing about it was that without being any kin to him she looked like Mr. Mark. She had the same high chin and the same temper asleep, in a manner of speech, behind her black eyes, and—well, when you see a woman customarily standing solid with her hands clasped behind her and one foot a little in front of the other, you'd better lie low, that's all. I argued that if she married Mr. Imboden there'd be the devil to pay and no pitch hot, as my uncle used to put it. Mr. Imboden was a thin gentleman with loose ears and no jaw to speak of, but the dressing-case and medicine-chest in his room were all crusted with gold, very fine.

Chunn and I served dinner, he being a fatherly chap who thought everybody except Mrs. Quinlevan ought to be having poached eggs in the nursery. But it was a seven course dinner they had, with plenty of wines, especially for young Mr. Collord, and Mr. Mark

silent at the head of the table, and his mother watching him continuous with her kind old eyes. Small blame to her, for you could see that he was holding himself in like he did when his ankle hurt him. And Miss Eldryce had the same air to her, only she bluffed it off different, jollying all the time the way I've noticed ladies do when I expect they don't want to think. As for Mr. Imboden, he looked just proud, as though she was his already, and as though he was an owner at the Horse Show with a winner in the ring and everybody clapping. He regular got my dander up, that Mr. Imboden did.

Next morning the four of them were all off in a Russian sleigh—the two young ladies and Mr. Imboden, wrapped up in furs like a mummy in the Metropolitan Museum, and Mr. Collord. Mr. Mark spent most of the day packing his boxes. I was in and out of his room and it did really gravel me, sort of, to see a man like him in any hard place and getting his bearings so twisted that he couldn't stand up and take his punishment, fighter's fashion. It made me kind of want to hit out myself, though I didn't rightly know what at. I can tell you one thing, though. If Mr. Imboden had brought his valet to Highcraggs, I'd have taken that valet behind the stable and trimmed him proper.

The sleighing party came back fagged. Young Mr. Collord had to have hot Scotches, and at dinner they agreed on late breakfasts the next day and early chocolate in their bedrooms. As regards Mr. Mark and Miss Eldryce, that dinner was just the opposite of the first. She was the quiet one now, and he so talky that anyone who didn't know might have guessed liquor. I suspicioned he was making fun of Mr. Imboden, in the way gentlemen do, but of course I couldn't tell.

There was music in the drawing-room, and Miss Eldryce sang lovely in some foreign language, and Mr. Collord, he played ragtime, and was mad when they yawned. I tiptoed about, putting out the lights and thinking

they'd all gone to bed, and by accident who should I see but Miss Eldryce and Mr. Mark, alone at the piano. She dropped her head and sat down and sang a little soft Devonshire song that I hadn't heard since my own mother sang it in the old country. Then Miss Miriam got up quick.

"Thank you. Your voice shall be with me always," said Mr. Mark. And after waiting, "For the last time," he said, "will you hear the truth about Mrs. Brett? She came near being a fool with another man. I opened her eyes. She asked me to bring her back to her husband. That is the truth."

Miss Miriam went on up the stairs, not turning.

"Forley," says Mr. Mark to me, "you take Rattock and the luggage-sleigh and drive with my things to the station tomorrow morning for the early express."

"Bound which way, sir?" says I.

"Bound north," said Mr. Mark. "I'll meet you at the station. I'm going afoot."

So I darkens the house, feeling blue as indigo. It sounds curious, maybe, but the only thing that gave me any comfort was to think how Minnie and I, after all our fallings out, had finally fixed it to be happy together, and had found out that the fallings out and the quarrels were fiddle-faddle. This, I expect, set me to wondering what Minnie would do if she was in my place and wanted to help Mr. Mark, and the long and short of it was that I didn't close my eyes with puzzling. I didn't puzzle for nothing, either.

## V

It was early when I tumbled out. Victorine was stirring in the butler's pantry, getting Miss Eldryce's chocolate. The tray was on the dining-room table. I slipped something underneath the napkin.

A long chance? Well, the long chance doesn't lose every time. Gamblers make their living out of the fellows who always play certainties. I

asked myself why Mr. Mark should be going afoot to the station, and I took a long chance. I hid the yellow sprig from my purse on Miss Eldryce's tray. Women like to be given a lead to do what they really want to do.

Mr. Mark was gone and all of his stuff was ready packed, but I idled around his room pretending to be busy, with the door open. After awhile I heard the click-click-click of hobnailed heels on the stairs. By glory! When I looked out of the window and saw Miss Miriam, hitting up the pace over the snow, I gave a cheer, all to myself. She had on a red sweater, I remember, and her black hair blew about her face most pretty.

Rattock drove me to the station with Mr. Mark's traps piled in the sleigh behind us. I couldn't say what might happen at the station, so from there I sent that Rattock about his business and told him he needn't wait. Off he drove, grumbling, and I sat down on a valise on the platform, and twiddled my thumbs and shifted my eyes from the road to the clock-dial and back so often I thought I'd be blinded.

Five minutes to train time and no sign of Mr. Mark, and I waltzed around the valise for a mascot. Two minutes—one minute—the express whistled at the bend. The station agent thought I was drunk, and no wonder, for I couldn't swear whether I was in Threadneedle street or Horsemongers' Jail. When that express pulled in and out and no passengers, I jumped upon a trunk and swung my cap.

"What's eating you?" calls out the station agent.

"I've won the Derby, old skee-sicks," says I, and starts back for the house. If Minnie'd only been there!

Maybe on the whole it's well she wasn't, because she'd have screamed or something when Mr. Mark and Miss Miriam showed up through the hemlocks at the fork of the Twin Rocks path. They didn't see me at first, but, while I was scheming to cut and run, the young lady spotted me

and touched Mr. Mark's elbow, they working sort of close together.

"Oh, Forley," says Mr. Mark, "I'm sorry to have troubled you. I've changed my mind about going away."

"Yes, sir," I says, and then, worse luck, my blundering eyes stuck on Minnie's memento fastened to Miss Miriam's jersey. The yellow flowers were like sunshine against the dark crimson. I bit my tongue, but I guess I grinned. Lord bless you, I couldn't help it! Miss Miriam laughed and whispered.

"By the way, Forley," said Mr. Mark, quite casual, "do you happen

to know who—who fixed Miss El-dryce's tray this morning?"

"No, sir," said I; "it's clean slipped my memory, sir, for good. And begging your pardon, Mr. Mark, and yours, miss, and not meaning to be disrespectful, I'll take my oath nobody else at Highcrag knows anything about it, either."

Mr. Mark looked at me solemn and yet smiling, somehow. "Forley," he says, "I'll be setting up an establishment of my own soon. I shall need you."

"Thank you, sir," says I. "Second man, sir?"

"No," said Mr. Mark. "First."



## CONTEMPLATION IS ALL RIGHT

HUNT—I'm contemplating matrimony.

CAMPBELL—Wise man.

"I shall probably be married in the autumn."

"Fool!"



## AND THEY HELD CAUCUSES

"I'D like to have my picture in your column, 'People Talked About!'"

"Are you talked about?"

"Sure; I've a wife and a mother-in-law."



## AT THE COTILLION

ELDERLY LADY (*watching the dancers*)—How well Mr. Heavyweight dances! He is so light on his feet.

YOUNG LADY (*who has had experience*)—Humph! I wish he were the same on other people's.

## A BROWNING JINGLE

By R. K. Munkittrick

FULL soon the mint on yonder hilltop  
Will top  
The lush spring lamb through which I capture  
Rapture,

Until it gilds my wild Elysian  
Vision,  
As I climb hills of gustatory  
Glory.

When I gaze on the spring lamb steaming  
Beaming  
E'en as a lily in a brooklet  
Nooklet,

I feel much as a maid who's gazing,  
Blazing  
With joy, upon a bird-and-wing-hat,  
Spring hat

Within a window when out shopping,  
Popping  
Along the pave to price and buy goods,  
Dry-goods,

As well as cups and saucers, pots and  
Cots and  
Other things that set the "daisy"  
Crazy.

I dream of Venice in the noon light,  
Moonlight,  
Or in the blue and pumpkin-pie light,  
Twilight,

And quite forget life's picayunes and  
Prunes and  
Reek with fancies by the wistful  
Fistful.

While of the lamb I'm dreaming gladly,  
Madly,  
And feeling at the core so very  
Merry,

## THE SMART SET

I know when fate shall to me bring lamb—  
     Spring lamb—  
 That spring itself will in the valley  
     Sally

To raise the fragrant mint to garnish,  
     Varnish,  
 And add a flavor to old king lamb,  
     Spring lamb,

Which is e'en as the strident hollow  
     Swallow,  
 A bringer of the ding-a-ling time  
     Springtime!



## RIGHT IN IT

MOLLY—Do you expect to have much fun at the Christmas masquerade?  
 DOLLY—How can I help having it? My hat will be trimmed with  
 mistletoe.



## TWO HEARTS THAT BEAT AS ONE

MR. DAMOIN (*of Iowa*)—I don't believe in mixed drinks.  
 COLONEL GORE (*of Louisville*)—Neither do I; I never put water in my  
 whisky.



## HAS TO RUN FOR IT

MRS. NAYBOR—What is your husband's pursuit in life?  
 MRS. SUBBUBBS—The seven-forty-five train.



A LIAR calls his deviation from the truth diplomacy.

# THE POWER OF THE PRESS

By B. Fletcher Robinson

“**H**E has the heart of a revolutionary,” said the Grand Duke Karl, as if he were quite certain about it.

“Such is the universal opinion in Wolfstein, your highness,” replied the Baron Stemnitz, chief of the police, tugging at his gray whiskers.

The grand duke rose from his chair and waddled up and down the room with his hands behind him. The frown that obscured his brow was witness to an extreme indignation for so benevolent a little man.

“This anxiety is telling upon me, Stemnitz,” he continued. “I cannot enjoy my meals. The duchess has noticed it.”

“Without doubt steps must be taken,” said the chief of the police.

“Steps? But what steps, imbecile?” cried the grand duke, halting in his promenade. “You tell me that the constitution of Wolfstein never contemplated such a journal as he produces. If I have him arrested I shall be held up as a monster of tyranny. Moreover, as he breaks no law, it is even possible that he may be acquitted. Yet I cannot—I cannot, upon my honor—stand another week of his social jottings. What, Stemnitz, what were his headlines this morning? Do not spare me.”

“It is my duty to obey your highness. They were as follows: ‘Karl at the Play. Another Bouquet for Operatic Star. Clubmen Gossip.’”

The grand duke grasped an ormolu writing-table with both hands, swaying from side to side as if in extreme pain.

“The duchess, Stemnitz!” he cried. “Do you think the duchess has seen it?”

“I have already taken the liberty, your highness, of confiscating the copies which a small boy was carrying to the servants’ quarters of the castle.”

“You did well, Stemnitz,” said the grand duke, dabbing his forehead with a red silk pocket-handkerchief. “Your zeal of late has not gone unmarked by us. Karl of Wolfstein does not forget those who serve the State—as we would have it served. You are promoted, my good Stemnitz, to the second class of the Green Falcon.”

The chief of the police bowed low under this honorable burden. Gratitude choked his utterance.

“Enough, enough,” said his master, observing his profound agitation. “But now to work, to plan. Is there nothing against this young man that will warrant his expulsion from Wolfstein? Has he not had a past?”

“Without doubt, your highness.”

“As I suspected. Of what odious crimes, of what unspeakable scandals is he guilty? Narrate them one by one.”

“May it please your highness, he was born in America.”

“That is scarcely in itself sufficient,” said the grand duke, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

“He then became a journalist.”

“Taken in conjunction with his place of birth, that might—eh?” hinted the grand duke, with a question in his eyebrows.

“Hardly, your highness, though stamping him as an object of suspicion.”

“Well, well; perhaps you are right. Proceed.”

“I fear that is all, your highness. In January last he inherited the sum of forty thousand marks through the

death of his uncle, Gustav Heffler, the baker of the Königstrasse—a most loyal citizen, who long supplied the castle with rolls which I have heard your highness describe as admirable. Gustav's elder brother, the young man's father, had emigrated to America and married a person of that nationality. On his uncle's death the young man came to Wolfstein, and, having publicly, in the most offensive manner, denounced the lack of progress in the town, employed a portion of his legacy in founding the paper under which we groan."

"All of which goes to prove that as regards him and his paper we are exactly where we started," said the grand duke irritably. "This is unworthy of you, Stemnitz. Favor me, I beg you, with some suggestion."

For several minutes there was silence—a silence unbroken save by the solemn ticking of the great Dresden clock, which, with its fringe of chubby cupids, adorned the mantelpiece. Suddenly the eyes of the baron, which had explored the carpet, the walls, the ceiling, became fixed, his brows contracted, and his right hand sought his forehead. These signs of intelligence did not pass unobserved by his master.

"You are thinking!" he cried.

The baron did not immediately affirm or deny this accusation. Instead his fingers clenched themselves, his bosom heaved under its heavy braid, he took a step forward and saluted. Finally he spoke.

"I have it," said he.

"Proceed, I urge you," implored the grand duke.

"Your highness may remember that some two weeks ago we arrested an Italian, Giovanni by name, who was employed by this Heffler in distributing his journal."

"I do. He had damaged the property of the State by pasting advertisements on the door of the Town Hall, and was very properly sentenced to one month's imprisonment."

"Since then we have discovered that he left his country under a cloud," continued the baron, dropping his voice to

an important whisper. "At Turin he was known as an accomplished anarchist."

"Bless my soul! I trust the jail is in a complete state of repair," said the grand duke, glancing nervously behind him. "No chance of his escape, Stemnitz? You've seen to that, eh?"

"There is none at present," answered the baron, with a meaning smile. "Now mark this point, your highness. While in prison his fare has been supplemented by sausages—the gift of the man Heffler."

"What, sausages? Were they searched, Stemnitz?"

"Yes, your highness, but without result."

"Anyhow, it's a suspicious circumstance. Can't we arrest him for it?"

"Such gifts are, I fear, made legal by the new prison regulations that your highness benevolently issued. But listen. Suppose Giovanni escapes. No—I pray you rest assured—there will be no danger. He will move in a mesh of my most expert detectives. Suppose, I say, he escapes. Whither will he fly? To the house of his employer, who will doubtless offer him shelter and refreshment. Suddenly the door is burst open; I and my men appear. The anarchist and his accomplice will be seized and by the law may be banished from the country. The journal, deprived of its editor, will find its grave. How likes your highness my plan?"

Folding his arms with a triumphant gesture, the baron paused for a reply; but the grand duke stood staring at his official with an expression of extreme discomfort.

"You may think yourself very smart, Stemnitz," he growled; "but to let loose an anarchist in my principality—why, confound it all, it's most ungenerous, most disloyal of you; it is, indeed."

"But it is the last resort, your highness," said the baron. "Also I trust that your highness will remember that he has announced a double number containing the story of your life—illustrated—for Saturday next, the day

fixed for the celebration of your accession."

"That must be stopped at all costs," cried the grand duke, with a hurried resolution. "At all costs, I say, Stemnitz. Proceed with your scheme; it has my full sanction."

As the next day's sun climbed to its summit over the high peaked roofs and winding streets of Wolfstein the worthy citizens who had gathered for their dinner in the Waliser Café, overlooking the main square, began to realize that there was something unusual in the wind.

Beneath the red and white awning of the balcony sat the chief of the police, with his eyes turned across the square to where a profusion of gilt lettering announced the editorial offices of the *Wolfstein World*. Two of the best known and most respected detectives of the town in the garb of waiters lounged against the balcony pillars, and they, too, looked steadfastly at the *Wolfstein World*. At both corners of the square the sun glittered on the helmets of the police, who, while feigning to doze, feigning to direct the traffic, feigning to check a tendency to loiter among the small boys, never ceased to regard the *Wolfstein World* with the most urgent attention. Indeed, as the Burgomaster Landolt remarked to his wife after draining his second tankard of iced lager, "My dear, without doubt the police are on the alert."

As the first deep note of noon boomed out from the cathedral clock a sweep in reduced circumstances crossed the square, mounted the steps of the balcony, and seated himself opposite the chief of the police. It was an exclusive café, but his presumption passed unchallenged. Not a waiter, not a guest but recognized that beneath the soot there moved the majesty of the law.

"Well, lieutenant," inquired the baron eagerly, "and what news?"

"At eleven-three Giovanni escaped from the exercise yard of the prison by the main door that had been left unbarred. Plunging into the woods he

endeavored to approach the town by a devious course. He might indeed have missed it altogether had not one of our men disguised as an English tourist placed him on the right path. We believe him now to be in the editor's room of the *Wolfstein World*."

"You believe, lieutenant! Surely there is no guesswork in this matter?"

"I regret to report to you an incident which for the moment forbids certainty. On reaching the town Giovanni avoided the more public streets, choosing one of the narrow alleys which approach the *Wolfstein World* from the rear. Inspector-Detective Zimmerleuten was keeping this passage under observation disguised as a municipal analyst. Still further to divert suspicion he was bottling samples of water from a disused well. Suddenly the desperado turned the corner. At the shock of his advent the inspector lost his balance. Fortunately the well was not deep. His cries soon brought him assistance, but before he was again drawn to the surface Giovanni had vanished."

"Idiot of a Zimmerleuten!" cried the baron savagely. "Would that they had let him drown! We must waste no time, lieutenant. Give the signal: Forward!"

The silver call had hardly sounded for the second time when the sunlit silence of the square was shattered by the tramp of running feet, stoutly booted. From the shadows of a side street sprang two firemen equipped with axes, followed by a squad of police brandishing their sabres. Thunderous blows echoed from the outer gate of the new journal. Indeed, two panels had already given way before it was discovered that this obstacle was merely latched. The narrow stairs were scaled with a single rush, but before the door marked "Private—Mr. John R. Heffler," the stormers recoiled. The baron stepped to the front.

"It is with desperate ruffians that we have to deal," he cried. "I implore you, my comrades, do not challenge my rights as your chief and

leader. Let me be the first to enter their lurking place."

"If Baron Stemmnitz should fall," said the lieutenant, with emotion, "it is we who will avenge him."

A low murmur of enthusiasm followed his words. Not a man attempted to dispute the precedence their chief had claimed.

The baron opened the door and peered cautiously round the corner.

Mr. John R. Heffler was seated in a low cane chair with his heels upon the edge of a roller-top desk. In the corner of his mouth was a long cigar, while about him proof-sheets nearly hid the polished oak of the flooring.

"Good day, baron," he remarked, in excellent German. "Did I hear you knocking?"

He was a good-looking young fellow, Teutonically broad in the beam, but with a straight, thin nose and a firm chin, legacies from his American mother.

"You don't seem well," he continued, rising from his chair. "Is anything the matter?"

"Further resistance is useless," cried the baron, producing a large revolver from his coat-tails. "You are surrounded and outnumbered."

For some moments John Heffler stared inquiringly at his visitor. Then he dropped back into his seat with a low whistle of comprehension.

"Waliser's hock is a heady wine," he remarked. "You should be more careful in this hot weather, baron; you should, indeed."

"This is no time for insolent banter. Where is your accomplice? Where is Giovanni, the anarchist?"

"In jail, unless you've let him out. He's too much of a blamed fool to have escaped by himself."

"You do not thus deceive me. He has broken loose; we have tracked him to your very door. Without a doubt you have concealed him in this house."

"Then you'd better hustle round and find him," snapped Heffler, turning back to his proof-reading. He was an even-tempered man, but he had his limits, and the baron was one of them.

Fully half an hour had moved strenuously by before the baron again strode into the room. Perspiration spangled his face, printer's ink and tufts of cotton streaked and specked his uniform. It was evident that the search had been hotly pressed.

"Had any luck?" asked Mr. Heffler politely.

The chief of the police grunted like a sulky bear, but he made no other observation.

The editor laid down his blue pencil. Rising to his feet he confronted the baron.

"You say this Giovanni is an anarchist. What reason have you for making such a charge?"

"It is enough that we know," replied the baron, in the rudest manner.

"Well, I'm sorry to hear it. He was a crank, but I didn't think he had the disease as bad as that. How was it you said he escaped?"

"The matter is still under investigation."

"I understand. Now, why did you imagine I was hiding the poor devil here?"

Mr. Heffler was affecting the baron's nerves. But when you have broken into a man's house, accused him of a serious crime and turned the whole place upside down it is difficult to avoid a few simple questions, though you belong to the Wolfstein police.

"The detectives saw him approaching your back door," he answered.

"Then why didn't they arrest him?"

"Be silent!" roared the baron, in great agitation. "Be silent, I say! I will not submit to this infamous cross-examination. You may have escaped, yet do not presume, young man, upon your good fortune. I warn you that we are not satisfied with the conduct of your journal. It is lacking in good taste, if not in assurance; in reverence for authorities, if not in scandal concerning them. Watch, therefore, lest a blow strike you where least expected. I wish you good day."

It is to be feared that Mr. Heffler was still unable to realize the serious nature of his position, for, as the door

closed behind the baron, he dropped into a chair and laughed and choked and choked and laughed again until the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"So the old fox set a trap, did he!" he gasped, wiping his eyes; "and it hasn't come off. An anarchist at large! Oh, my poor Stemnitz, what will your grand duke say to that! An anarchist at large! It's the greatest sensation that Wolfstein has had for fifty years. And I've got it all to myself, a very scoop of scoops. Thrice blessed Stemnitz—where's my writing-pad?"

The sun dipping from its meridian saw Mr. Heffler bent at his desk, covering page after page, while from beneath him came the thump and jangle of the linotype machines. For the *Wolfstein World* was set upon an innovation. It was about to bring out an evening edition.

"Drive on, man, drive on!" thundered the baron, thrusting his scarlet face out of the window. "What the deuce are you waiting here for?"

"If you please, Herr Baron, the drawbridge is up."

"Why, bless me, so it is!" cried the baron, groping for the door-handle. "Very remarkable thing, very remarkable indeed."

There was no doubt about it. The carriageway ended at the rim of the castle moat, on the further side of which the heavy planking of the drawbridge stood reared perpendicularly.

"They have seen us; they are lowering it!" cried the coachman.

"Imbecile! I have eyes, have I not?" barked his master. "Go! It is now five o'clock. You may return in an hour."

The chief of the police might be pardoned some show of irritation. All that afternoon his men had searched for the Italian without success, and now a mounted messenger had summoned him to the castle. He had hoped to secure the anarchist before he presented himself, but he could not disobey such urgent orders.

"What is this folly?" he asked the

porter, who, having lowered the bridge, stood to receive him in the shade of the great gate.

"It is the command of his highness," replied the fellow stiffly.

The baron would not stoop to inquire further of so insignificant an official, but he would have given a month's salary to know what it all meant.

The grand duke's favorite body-servant was waiting for him in the first hall.

"Thank heaven, you have come, Herr Baron!" he cried. "His highness most urgently desires your presence."

"Where is his highness, my good Fritz?"

"In the old armory."

"In the where?" asked the baron, spurning grammar in his astonishment.

"The old armory. He has been there perhaps half an hour."

The old armory of the castle of Wolfstein lay at the extremity of the left or most ancient wing. To reach it involved the passage of numerous sudden descents, winding stairs and narrow corridors, which, being indifferently lighted, resulted in sundry jolts, rasps and contusions most exasperating to a man in the baron's state of mind. The low oak door was reached at last, however; Fritz opened it discreetly, ushered in the visitor and as silently closed it behind him.

"Scoundrel!" said a voice.

The baron looked to right, to left, above, below. The sunset, blazing through the east window, showed him the antiquated weapons upon the walls and the collection of wooden dummies which, clad in full armor, lined the main alley of the hall. But no living thing was visible.

"Infamous traitor! You shall be hanged, if there is law in Wolfstein!"

The voice certainly resembled that of the grand duke, but it seemed impossible that a gentleman of his highness's figure could so completely conceal himself. An uneasy tremor shook the baron. The castle was above the average in ghostly legends. Many and black had been the deeds done in this very chamber. The sinister details thronged fast upon his memory.

"Hanged, beheaded, drawn and quartered, by my sacred ancestors!" piped the voice, almost in his ear.

The baron staggered forward with a cry of alarm. His outstretched hand grasped the shoulder of the first of the mailed warriors. But at the same instant he received a sounding box on the ear that projected him against the opposing effigy, to which he clung, gazing wildly over his shoulder at his assailant.

"Would you lay sacrilegious hands upon our person?" cried the grand duke, revealing himself by removing his helmet and turning his flushed face upon the culprit. "Is it thus that you express repentance for your crimes?"

"Pardon, your highness," stammered the bewildered official. "In your disguise of——"

"Disguise — this is no disguise!" thundered his master. "The helmet I may perhaps dispense with, but this corselet of hammered steel is for my daily wear until such time as you bring me tidings of the capture of this blood-thirsty ruffian. Think, baron, think to what you have condemned me in this extremely warm weather!"

"If your highness refers to the escape of the Italian, Giovanni—" began the baron.

"To what else should I refer? Excuses will not avail you. I know all. Read this."

The baron seized the paper that was thrust into his hands and tottered to the window. It was an evening edition of the *Wolfstein World*—a departure new to him. The upper half of the front page was covered with a series of headlines in the largest type. This is how they ran:

**"DESPERATE ANARCHIST NOW AT LARGE."**

**"FEARS FOR THE GRAND DUKE'S SAFETY."**

**"THE ITALIAN SMART WITH KNIFE, BUT BOMB HIS FAVORITE WEAPON."**

**"SPECIAL INTERVIEW WITH CHIEF STEMNITZ."**

"Great heavens!" groaned the baron.

"Why is this infamous editor permitted to exist?"

"You would persecute him because he tells the truth, eh?" cried the grand duke. "For myself, I discover something of value in this young man. His leading article contains expressions of concern for my safety, demands for a display of greater energy by the police, and scathing attacks upon those who would subvert established authority, which are filled, in my poor opinion, with the most noble spirit. He will probably receive a substantial reward—he will, in short, be decorated."

The baron made no complaint at this change of front; he was crushed into silence by its flagrant injustice.

"Pray give me the benefit of your close attention," continued the grand duke, with the utmost severity. "You will send fifty police to guard the castle tonight. The soldiers are not sufficient—they are fools; also they have arrears of pay. The police will remain here until you have captured this assassin, which capture must be effected in one week from today. If at the end of that time he is still at large you lose your post."

"But, your highness," expostulated the baron, "that will leave me with scarce a dozen men. How can I hope to track him down, to take the thousand intricate steps that only professional detectives could imagine, to search from house to house—how can I do this without my men?"

"I have no idea, Baron Stemnitz; nor do I intend increasing my present anxieties by attempting to conceive one. You have heard my orders. For today you are excused."

"It is my zeal that has destroyed me," murmured the chief of the police, as he stumbled out through the door.

Never had there been known such excitement in *Wolfstein*—no, not in the memory of the oldest inhabitant.

Mr. Heffler's evening edition was read with indignation. The town waited for the usual official contradiction. But when on the next day the chief of the police swore in one hundred

and twelve special constables the truth became no longer doubted, while the postponement of the grand duke's accession rejoicings sent a shiver of alarm through the entire community.

The *Wolfstein World* kept the situation at full tension. A hint at germs in the municipal reservoir wiped out the local branch of the Temperance party; after perusing an article upon poisons the grand duke abandoned his regular meals, relying solely on eggs laid by approved hens under his own eyes; the new boiler-plate shutters at the police station were the result of a mere paragraph on revolvers. Never in the history of anarchy had a man sprung more swiftly into a position at once so notable and so notorious. Giovanni the Italian hung above Wolfstein like a hawk over a chicken run.

Three days had gone by, and the baron was passing from activity and irritation into the stupor of despair. No theory that the *Wolfstein World* suggested but had been probed to its very depths, yet no clue of value had become manifest. On the evening of the fourth he was sitting in the balcony of his official residence when his manservant approached him.

"A letter for you, Herr Baron."

He took it from the man's hands and laid it on his knee, while he searched for his glasses in one pocket, found them in another, and finally placed them on his nose. This is what met his astonished gaze:

There is a man at Kirchoffer's hotel, room No. 27, second floor front, that knows where Giovanni is. He is a foreigner, also a desperate fellow for dynamite. He will not speak about the Italian unless he is trapped into it. Go after dark and give him the password, which is "Death to tyrants, four—eight—two," then he will think you are a local comrade and one of the band. But have a care, for plots are abroad and the State is mined and menaced. No more from your

WELL-WISHER.

For some time the baron sat staring at this mysterious communication. Alarm and jubilation struggled to gain possession of his features. At last he rose and with an aspect of extraordi-

nary resolution strode upstairs to his bedroom.

Nine o'clock had boomed from the cathedral when the baron, in a gray wig, blue glasses and a voluminous cloak of an obsolete pattern, emerged from the shadows of the Town Hall and, crossing the moonlit street, entered Kirchoffer's hotel. The gentleman in No. 27 was in his room and would see him, was the answer returned by the waiter. With a palpitation of the heart for which, of course, the stairs were accountable, the chief of the police was ushered into the presence of the unknown desperado.

He was a man of melancholy and unprepossessing exterior. The long and tangled locks that hung about his head, the black eyebrows, the bristly mustache, the untidy costume, all served to envelop him in an atmosphere of political suspicion. Upon the table at which he was writing lay a heavy revolver, the handle conveniently at his elbow. The baron regarded this weapon with an alarm that he found impossible wholly to conceal.

"Welcome to you," said the stranger, in low, sonorous accents.

"Death to tyrants—four—three—eight—ahem—that is—four—eight—three."

"What?" cried the stranger, grasping his revolver with the rapidity of a striking snake. "What did you say?"

"Four—eight—two, I mean," spluttered the baron, hastily referring to a note on his shirt cuff.

"It is well—but be more careful in the future, lest death leave you no chance of correction. Indeed, brother, I did not hope to meet yet another of us in this town of Wolfstein. You are, I take it, also of the local branch?"

"Merely a humble instrument," said the baron, with a modest air. "Have you yet seen our chief, our Giovanni?"

"Daily do I hold converse with him. A noble fellow, brother, who will rise to greater things. In his choice of plots, in his knowledge of explosives, in his courage, acumen and ingenuity, he stands upon a pinnacle of solitary excellence. He would think no more

of hurling this hotel to destruction than I of striking this lucifer."

The baron glanced around him uneasily as the unknown lit his cigarette.

"Has Giovanni any schemes for the immediate future?" he asked.

"Perhaps a score, though I understand that there is one upon which he is now concentrating his closest attention."

"The destruction of the grand duke, the odious Karl, will without doubt be a striking effort," said the perfidious baron, as if he knew all about it.

"It is not the tyrant Karl at whom he aims, but the malevolent Stemnitz, chief of the police. Any moment may see that rascal's well-merited obliteration."

The baron opened his mouth, but with a great effort suppressed the cry of alarm that should have resulted. Fortunately the disguise concealed the extreme agitation of his features.

"Do you know how—how it will be contrived?" he stammered.

"In truth, brother, my memory fails me. Yet it had, I fancy, something to do with a bottle—or was it perhaps a pipestem? Really, I forget which, but you must believe me that it was incredibly ingenious and foredoomed to success."

"Let me assure you that Giovanni is making a terrible mistake," urged the baron, wiping the perspiration from his forehead. "Stemnitz is a man of the most advanced opinions. I have long considered him as a probable convert to our cause. For a week at least let him be respited. Why waste time and dynamite upon this worthy fellow when the grand duke still tyrannizes over us from within the feudal walls of his insolent castle?"

"Can you answer for it that Stemnitz will attempt nothing against us?"

"As I would for myself."

"Good. And this Karl—his death, as you believe, would afford a more profitable example?"

"I have no doubt at all in the matter."

"Yet I understood that this Stem-

nitz had intrigued against our good friend Heffler, whose *Wolfstein World* flaps the wings of freedom daily in the face of feudal reaction."

"You have been woefully misinformed," cried the baron eagerly, as one who sees daylight among threatening shadows. "Stemnitz holds our worthy editor in high esteem. They are, as it were, old comrades, trusting each in each."

"I am very pleased to hear it," said the unknown, removing his wig and mustache.

"Heffler!" cried the baron, with a scream of indignation. "Infamous creature, do you know who I am?"

"Of course, my dear Stemnitz. Forgive a little play which at least has displayed the generosity of your feelings toward me."

For answer the baron rushed to the door and whistled a low, shrill call. In an instant the clatter of feet sounded on the stairs and a dozen men came crowding into the room.

"Arrest that man," he said, pointing to the editor.

"But, baron, your promises, your assurances of support?"

"If he continues to speak, gag him!" thundered the baron.

"Mercy—in the name of your kind, your benevolent master, the grand duke."

"The grand duke be——"

What awful expression would have passed his lips will never be known. For at this moment the yellow curtains of the bed that stood at the further end of the room gave way with a rending tear. At the sound the baron snatched the pistol from the table, but the next moment he dropped his weapon and staggered back against the wall.

"Allow me, your highness," said Mr. Heffler, stepping forward. With a portentous stride the grand duke advanced to the middle of the room.

"My worthy Heffler," he said, while he fixed the baron with a dreadful stare, "I thank you for this opportunity. I have learned tonight to what depths incompetence may descend.

Explain the facts, I pray you, to that wretched man."

"I am really very sorry, baron," said the editor; "but having discovered the little trick you attempted to play me I could not resist a return game. I had the honor yesterday to inform his highness that Giovanni had left the country. Some stray volumes of Tolstoi had converted him, it seems, while in jail. He is now an advocate of universal peace, has a moral objection to explosions and is on his way to join the Doukobors in Canada, to which admirable sect he intends to attach himself. His highness did me the further honor to express gratitude for this intelligence and consented to come here this evening that he might personally note the methods of his police, who had failed to make the discovery, which indeed fell to one of my reporters."

"Believe me, your highness, the words I used were a ruse," implored the baron. "I spoke as a detective, not as—"

"Silence, infamous one!" cried the grand duke. And then turning to Mr. Heffler he continued, "The editorship of the Court Circular, with its customary emoluments, is yours. From this hour you may, moreover, consider your paper as the semi-official journal of the principality."

"If you could also influence a few trade advertisements—" suggested Mr. Heffler.

"I will do what I can, young sir; of that remain assured. But to mark my signal gratitude for your noble conduct I grant you one further request, which I will execute if it be in my power. This I promise you on the word of a Wolfstein."

The editor paused for some moments. Presently a smile crept round his lips,

broadening into a grin of satisfaction. He glanced from the baron to the grand duke and back again. Then he spoke.

"Great is the clemency of your highness—I ask pardon for the chief of your police."

The flushed face of the prince showed the severity of his internal struggle. Twice he essayed to speak and twice fell silent.

"My word is my word, Mr. Heffler," he said at last. "But may I ask the reason for your strange demand?"

"Your highness, I feel that I played it rather low down on the baron, after all. On my honor, the scheme was an impulse and I did not realize how hard I was hitting a fallen man. He has served your highness well in the past, has he not? Proved himself a willing, even an unscrupulous servant. I believe?"

"True—that is true," murmured the grand duke, with some haste.

"And may do so again, I have no doubt. Your highness, I thank you."

The baron dropped on his knees before his master, clutching for his hand. Tears rolled down his cheeks and clung to his whiskers.

"Most noble!" he cried. "How can I thank you for this clemency? How can—?"

"Don't thank me, Sternnitz," growled the grand duke. "Go and thank Heffler there. He's been a true friend to you. I always said he was a good fellow, didn't I?"

"Without doubt, your highness—in the most gracious manner—on all occasions."

And such is the mad humor of the world that at that moment Baron Sternnitz, reappointed chief of the police, meant what he said.



ALAS, YES!

TEACHER—What change takes place when water is converted into ice?  
JOHN SMART—A change of price, ma'am.

## THE GOOD LISTENER

"YES," said the voluble man to his neighbor on the way to the office. They sat next to each other in the street car. "I always like to talk with you because I always learn something. You have something to say and you say it. You don't sit like a bump on a log and let another man do all the talking. You have ideas and you know how to express them."

"I flatter myself—" began the other.

"That's the way it is, you see. I can sit and hear you talk all day, because I know I am improving my mind; while there are other men I can't listen to for a minute."

"I was going to say——"

"I told my wife the other day that I could get more good solid information in hearing you talk ten minutes than in listening to some men a week."

"May I remark——?"

"There's that Smith. I get up and leave the car every time I see him enter, for he is a good enough fellow in his way, but he wants to talk all the time and he never says anything. I'm not much of a talker myself, but I like to get in a word edgeways."

"If you will allow me——"

"I don't see how you manage to pick up so much information on all kinds of subjects the way you do. I don't want to flatter you, but you seem to be posted on almost everything."

"If you would give me a moment——"

"I would talk all the time if I was as good at it as you are. Folks often say to me: 'Jones, why don't you talk?' But I know enough to keep still when men are about who know by long odds more than I do."

"To talk well one must have——"

"That's just it, you see. One must have a good listener. Now, what I admire myself for more than anything else is that I am a good listener. I can ride all the way into town listening to you, as I am now, and hardly open my mouth. 'Cause why? 'Cause I know a good talker when I hear one."

"But you don't——"

"Oh, yes, I do. I understand everything you say on the subject. Of course, I can't dress it up in such shape as you do. You are a natural talker. I am not. You open your mouth and the words run out clear as a brook; and I can't help but listen."

"May I——?"

"Well, I get off here," rising and shaking hands. "You don't know how I have enjoyed listening to you. Instructive as ever. Wish I might fall in with you every morning on the way to the office. Good-bye. Good-bye."



## STOLEN

ELSIE—When did you find out you were standing under the mistletoe?  
 AGNES (*blushing*)—When it was too late.

# THE SEVEN SONGS OF PENITENCE

By Theodosia Garrison

**L**ONG since I wounded him I loved the best,  
And all that night my pillow knew no rest;  
And in the morning I arose, and lo!  
The wound I gave him showed on mine own breast!  
Ah, then I knew how terrible the blow.

## II

Within a dream one night I spake to thee,  
"What is this road of thorns and misery  
That stretches from my dwelling to thy door?"  
And thou, "The road that leads thee back to me."  
Yet will I walk it steadfastly, oh, friend,  
What though my feet be bleeding and most sore,  
So thou shalt bind them for me at the end.

## III

I sent my longing for thee like a bird  
To sing without thy door a certain word,  
The word of penitence most exquisite.  
And weary in the morning it returned  
And said, "Against his pane all night unheard  
I beat my wings, and when the red dawn burned  
One drew the casement close and fastened it."

## IV

Belovèd, are the tears I shed for thee  
Less than white roses thrown for majesty  
To trample on with cruel, careless feet?  
Nay, pass not unregarding. Pause and see.  
Grown with such pain they surely must be sweet.

## V

So much I missed my joy that everywhere  
I sought it—by each corridor and stair;  
Yea, sought and called until my voice was dumb,  
Yet all the while I knew it was not there,  
But waits within thy dwelling till I come.

## THE SMART SET

## VI

Sometimes at night within thy vacant chair  
 I bid another sit with face as fair,  
 And laugh and drink red wine and force my heart  
 To braggart boasting that we do not care;  
 But when the gray dawn climbs its windy stair,  
 Truthful I waken in the old grief's might  
 And cry unto the heart I bade forswear,  
 "Ah, Liar, how we lied to Love last night!"

## VII

The door of my poor house for thee is wide  
 As bridegroom swings the door that waits the bride,  
 But my impatience is so great a thing  
 I may not light my lamps and wait inside,  
 But I am gone to meet thee ere the day  
 To cry to thee afar my welcoming.  
 Oh, friend, thy feet are slow upon the way!



## COLLEGE EXAMS

PROFESSOR OF SCIENCE—What is the best known insulator?  
 M. P. CUNIUS—Poverty.



## WANTED TO SPEND IT

JASPER—I told my wife last week that I had something laid aside for a rainy day.  
 RASPER—What did she say?  
 "She has been praying for rain ever since."



## OVERHEARD

"DON'T you think she sings with feeling?"  
 "No; if she had any feeling she wouldn't sing."

# ALOES AND AMBROSIA

By Edgar Saltus

IF you have ever heard "Lucrezia Borgia," and even if you have not, you may recall the brindisi which that delightful opera provides—*Il segreto per esser felice*. The *segreto*—the secret of happiness—is one which the aria does not, of course, very adequately disclose. But it may be that Donizetti, who wrote it, thought that the music sufficed. Composers are human. They have their illusions.

Music we used to regard as the vapor of art. But succeeding seasons at the Metropolitan have chastened us. We regard it now as the most expensive of noises. It is a pleasure, of course, to have box-holding friends gratify your taste for it, but when, as may happen, you have to cater personally to that taste, to the superior taste also which the ladies of your household display in the selection of thousand-dollar opera-cloaks, why, then, don't you know, you rather appreciate what Cornewall Lewis meant when he said that life would be agreeable were it not for its pleasures.

The secret of happiness is not, therefore, lyrically possible, unless indeed such cheerful operas as the "Elixir of Love" and the "Rheingold" could first be fused and then injected, the one into your heart, the other into your pocket. That would be so nice, don't you think? For perhaps, after all, the secret consists but in having the dreams of an archangel with—to express them—the resources of a billionaire.

The theory is tempting, is it not? And yet, when you come to look at it, you see that it is not quite tenable. There is plenty of it, but not enough to

go around. It won't work. Not because it is bad. On the contrary. But because while, as a nation, we produce everything, including panics, and raise all things, except hexameters, we are too practical to believe for a moment that by any chance we could all become plutocrats and angels to boot.

Plutocrats, yes, that is possible. Fifty years ago there were but two millionaires among us. Pluto was known in the schools, but the plutocrat had not appeared in the streets. He had not even appeared in the dictionary. Today millionaires are as common as princes in Petersburg. We have quite a hundred thousand of them. In fifty years that is rather progressive. Moreover, as the multiplication of the breed promises to proceed, there is not a reason in the world why the rest of us should not join the procession, no reason either why, eventually, the poorest among us should not become spoiled old men of fortune—but not angels. A population composed exclusively of rich old seraphs is a monstrosity at which the imagination balks.

Is it not, though, a nice subject? To talk love is to make love. Influenza is not more contagious than laughter. To discuss happiness is to beckon it. But though nice to discuss it is hard to find. To define it is even harder.

You may say that unhappiness consists in the disagreeable things that happen to one, and that therefore happiness must be the sum total of the bothers which one manages to elude. Yet though you so character-

ize it you provide but a description. Descriptions are always inadequate. Pictures are worse.

In a Bavarian inn we once saw a picture of a man riding like mad after a phantom that kept on ahead, always just out of reach. Beneath, for legend, were the words: *Die Jagd nach dem Glück*—The Chase After Happiness. Only Bavaria would tolerate a picture such as that. It is not wicked exactly, but it is so dreadfully stupid.

Happiness is not a goal, or, as represented in the picture, a quarry. It is the horse that carries you. The secret of it does not consist in the selection of the animal, for we all know what kind of a nag we prefer. What we do not know is how to hold on to the beast when we have got him, or rather, when get him we do; the result being that there are more runaway happinesses and consequent spills than the fates perhaps intended. But people are so venturesome! They mistake a bucking bronco for a park hack, and then wonder at ensuing croppers.

That is all wrong. There ought to be schools for this sort of thing. For that matter there is one. In Paris recently a School of Happiness was opened. There is a step in the right direction—but only a step, and one, too, that cannot last. The bother will be, don't you see, to get not pupils but teachers, in which unhappiness the school must close.

Of course there are the dictionaries. They indeed are highly instructive. According to them happiness is a state of good fortune. But tastes differ. Canned in chronicles are the memoirs of a satrap whose good fortune was such that he owned everything in sight—and out of it—except this little thing. To acquire it he consulted a spook. The spook told him to get and wear the coat of a happy man. Throughout the satrapy a happy man was sought. When he was found it was found, too, that he was coatless. From which you may see not merely how tastes differ but how useful dictionaries are.

But these are hateful thoughts. The satrap lived a long time ago and probably never lived at all. Moreover, admitting that happiness is not a state of fortune, good or bad, it must be something else. And it is. Happiness is a breakfast. The courses consist not of cereals but of surprises. In commenting on the menu, Victor Hugo—always magnificent—described it as a banquet, "to which," he declared, "many are called." But to which, we may add, few get up.

That, too, is all wrong. Indolent people should not be deprived of happiness. Indolent people are the very ones who would enjoy it most. Ants, tradesfolk, literary persons and the predatory rich are too busy to know whether they are happy or not. It is only indolent people that have the requisite leisure.

A plea, then, for them. But everything is possible. Some day or other you may be sure that happiness will be an article of commerce. It is not even chimerical to assume that elsewhere it has been patented. The fact that with us two and two make four is not a reason why in some more favored planet they should not make five. The fact that moral substances are unknown to us does not prove that there are none. By the same token, because happiness seems illusory here there is not a reason in the world, or, more exactly, in the universe, why elsewhere it should not have been reduced to a paste and put up in collapsible tubes. Is there, now? Of course not. Obviously, then, we have but to get at its basic element and proceed to its manufacture.

To that end the story of the satrap, while hateful, is helpful. For it shows that happiness is what we think it, provided, however, and on condition, that what we think it happens to be what we have not got—a deduction which, when you come to look it over, amounts but to this, that happiness is a product of the imagination.

Imagination is a great thing to have about the house. It curtains your corridors with cashmeres and sets

chimeras to await your approach. It may not precisely preside over the conception of best selling novels, but it squats among the poms of etiquette. We are indebted to it for things as unrelated as sins and fashions, sonatas and scandals, antipathies and affections, divorces and domesticity, good manners and bad, public opinion and private ennui. It makes some people feel that they are great shakes and others that they are great bores. It does more. So potent are its spells that it puts you on good terms with yourself. It is the only earthly thing that can. In short, even in the limits of this paragraph, there are no limits to the wonders it can work. Without it we should still be up a tree. We should still be among the ancestral apes from whom it has obligingly aided us to descend.

Think of that! Imagination is therefore a necessity when it does not happen to be a nuisance. There is nothing more tiresome than a woman who has none except a lady who has too much. Otherwise, while it lends to life a certain terror, it gives it, too, its entire tone. Throw out imagination and existence would be torpid. Happiness and unhappiness would be quite the same thing.

From all of which it follows, or ought to follow, that given that which appeals to the imagination most, together with that which appeals to it least and, between them, ought to be the secret of the world's desire.

Here, at once, in the land of the brave and the home of the freebooter, coin is obviously suggestive. But the obvious is misleading. Barring a pauper we know of nothing glummer than a plutocrat. Coin is not happiness expressed in a word, though lack of coin may be unhappiness in three. No, that which appeals to the imagination most is not lucre but life, precisely as that which appeals to it least is not dividends but death.

The great desiderata are therefore the preservation of life, the avoidance of death, with—to employ an engaging vulgarism—something on the side.

But something is a euphemism. In spite of a hymn to the contrary we want a great deal here below, we want it earnestly, we want it long, until we get it, when we do not want it any more, for it never, to use another delightful image, seems quite to fill the bill.

Never is an interminable word. But in this instance it has history for support, and, as the only way you can read the future is through the past, we are perhaps rather safe in saying that it never will, unless, indeed, science takes a hand, in which case we may get something fit and, with it, happiness at last.

Happiness is like love and like beauty. We all know, or think we know, what these things are, yet no one has been able to define them; which is odd, when you come to think about it, for they are all so intimately related that in the dark you might mistake them for triplets. They are the outward and visible signs of life as it should be and, perhaps, as it was.

The perhaps injected there is meant to be spacious. Behind it is the fancy ball which, once upon a time, was held on Olympus, while, above and beyond it, is the affiliated story of the career of the soul. With the fancy ball we will catch up in a moment. By way of prelude the dream-like strophes of the story should be heard. In that story the soul's primal home was color, its sustenance light. From beatitude to beatitude it floated, blissfully, ineffably, until, in its ethereal evolutions, its incarnations began and from the ether divine it fluttered and, fluttering, sank, lower, still lower, losing its attributes at each descent, until, clothed in flesh and desire, it awoke in the senses of man.

The story, as you may see, is poetic. But is it not also profound? Does it not seem to intimate that if any shape of loveliness evokes an idea of what beauty really is, or any form of happiness incites a dream of what beatitude may be, both are due to what we once beheld when we were other than what we are? Or, more exactly and less

poetically, are not these effects due simply to imagination?

There, then, is the chance for science. It has other opportunities, of course. Motors are becoming rather vulgar, don't you think? and airships might advantageously replace them, particularly if they were too expensive for common use. On wireless telegraphy we have supped. It would be agreeable now if it were extended to the upper circles and communication with Mars began. What the fashions are there would interest us all very much. The telephone, too, could be improved. It should transmit sights as well as sounds, not merely voices, but faces. In time, no doubt, it will. We shall be relieved of the fatigue of conversing darkly. In time, too, we shall gad about in airships and learn the last scandals in Mars. But, even so, these things will not bring happiness. Nothing can—except happiness itself, and, for science, there is the chance.

How science may go about it is simple enough. It has but to take not a page but a phase from that ball on Olympus. We have shown that the basis of happiness is the imagination, and, without showing, we all know that apart from life and death that which affects the imagination most is love. Between life, which appeals to the imagination, and death, which it appals, love alone appeases. The tokens of love are youth and beauty. In that ball on Olympus there was something that produced them. That something was ambrosia.

Genius, somebody said, is a faculty for remembering, coupled, we assume, with the little art of handing out what it remembers as its own. For all we care that little art may be prac-

ticed by science. It is only to recall the effects of ambrosia and then recover the recipe. Nothing could be easier. For the recipe, smuggled by the Olympians from the Orient, is obtainable still.

Yes, indeed. It is contained in the Mahābhārata—a good book, though not a cook book—where the dish, catalogued as *somā*, is described as an *entremets* of jasmine and curds, which, whoso ate of, became young and beautiful at once.

There you have—or had—happiness in a concrete form. You may object that this is all mythical. Even so, it is not for that reason unreal. Were time reversible the legend of our telephones and telegraphs would seem quite as mythical to the old divinities as their ambrosia and afflatus do to us.

There, anyway, is the secret. Science may yet find that two and two make five, it may yet find a moral substance, and if a moral substance, why not an eudemonistic one, why not a bliss food? Then at last we should have something fit. Instead of breakfasting on the aloes of life we could send to the grocer for ambrosia.

That would be nice, would it not? But it is not everyone that will think so. The austere will declare that such breakfasting is contrary to nature. They will be quite right. And that will make it all the nicer. For everything we do, from reading novels to getting cured of a cold in the head, is contrary to nature. Nature is not propitious or even progressive. The gods were both. It was they that invented happiness. What was good enough for them ought to be good enough for us, particularly, don't you think, if the time ever comes when we can send for it around the corner?



## THAT, AT LEAST, WAS CERTAIN

MRS. NOAH—What do you suppose posterity will say of us?

NOAH—Well, they can't say that we didn't know enough to go in when it rained.

# RASPBERRY

By W. H. Kirkbride

**W**HY Billy—Billy's my master, you know—ever called me anything so stupid I cannot imagine, for all the other horses on the ranch have such beautiful, high-sounding names. There are Roderick, and King James, those noble, proud-looking chestnuts; Fox Hunter, my friend who taught me to jump; the Duchess of Marlborough, and all the rest of the Eastern-bred horses.

Even the rest of the cow-ponies and cayuses had prettier names than I. My best friend, Wissihican, and Chief Joseph, Nez Perce, Asotin and Lapway, were all Indian names that were beautiful compared with mine. I would have been proud to have been called "Buck" even, for it is a good, substantial name. But Raspberry! What a name for the best cow-pony on the range, just because I had peculiar reddish hair!

I never once thought about my name until those Eastern horses came out here. How happy I was until then!

In spite of their faults I cannot help admiring them. They are not little, sawed-off ponies, as I am, but great, beautiful horses, with glossy coats and arched necks, who pick up their feet as if they were ashamed to put them down again on our Idaho soil. I wonder if they do the same back in New York, or whether they just do it to show off?

I used to envy them when they first came out here, they looked so beautiful and had such fine manners; thoroughbreds, every inch of them.

How they did scorn me and my friends! They would not associate with or even look at us, and several

times I heard them talking about me, making fun of my peculiar shade and slovenly walk.

I shall never forget the day I was introduced to them in the corral. Billy had been riding me hard, and turned me into the corral to be rubbed down by the man who has charge of Roderick and King James—a "groom" he calls himself, whatever that means.

"This is Raspberry," he said to them, "and there's not a horse in New York State, or Idaho either, who can touch him." And then he left us together.

I took this for an introduction, and though I did not like the way they had snubbed me, I wanted to live up to our Western hospitality; so I went up to them and asked politely if they did not find our Western alfalfa very refreshing after Eastern hay. You should have seen them stare at me.

"We eat alfalfa or hay! We, New York thoroughbreds!" And they laughed scornfully and turned their backs on me.

"I suppose you are going to be cow-ponies?" I asked, paying them the highest compliment that can be paid to a Western horse.

"We cow-ponies!" they shrieked. "We are thoroughbred coach-horses, blue-ribbon thoroughbreds, mind you, and don't care even to associate with you homely, low-bred creatures." And with that they walked proudly away, with necks curved and eyes flashing, and that grand, easy, high-stepping stride of theirs.

My feelings were terribly hurt, I must admit. I hung my head and walked slowly off, more unhappy than

I had ever been before. I jumped the corral, an easy task for me, and ran as fast as I could, for I did not want that man who had charge of Roderick and King James to touch me, after all I had heard.

I went far up the creek to my accustomed place in the shade of the tall, cool pines, where no one would see me, to think it over.

As I drank from the clear, pure mountain stream I saw my reflection in the water. Yes, I was very, very homely. My neck was short and straight, and try as I would I could not get that aristocratic curve in it. Instead of the rich, dark brown chestnut hair of the thoroughbreds, my coat was a peculiar, ugly mixture, unlike anything that I had ever seen.

The only point I had in my favor was my tail. I have a glorious tail, long and silky, and I can reach any part of my body with it, brushing off the flies with ease. I wonder what could have happened to the tails of the thoroughbreds? They are about seven or eight inches long, with only a tassel of hair hanging from them. Such stubby-looking things I have never seen. Poor creatures, I pity them when fly-time comes!

For a few days after this I felt miserable and discontented. Why was I so ugly and low-born? How nice it would be to have people gaze in admiration at me, and say how beautiful I was! And how nice it would be to live on rich food, to be washed and kept clean all the time, with a beautiful box-stall, and soft, thick straw to sleep on!

Some of my friends felt as I did, but most of them were above envy, and never paid the slightest attention to the thoroughbreds, but actually treated them as their inferiors. Some of them, indeed, were of as old families as the thoroughbreds, and as good-looking in their way, caring nothing for blue ribbons and pedigrees.

I could not be comforted at first. With no family, no looks, and the name of Raspberry, I could not feel proud.

As I think of those days I become thoroughly ashamed of myself. I, a free-born Western pony, strong and sound and honest, fleet of foot, good-tempered, and a hard, conscientious worker, was actually guilty of being jealous of the narrow, butterfly life of the proud but good-looking thoroughbreds!

It was my dear, honest friend Wissihican who first made me see things in their true light. He had noticed my crestfallen air and bad temper, and asked me what it was. I took him off to my favorite spot, under the pines, where we had stood many an hour on cold winter nights, with our bodies close together, keeping each other warm. Here we lay down in the cool of the shade, and placing my nose across his withers I unburdened my heart to him, telling him how ashamed I was of my name, my birth and my life, and how I longed for the good things that I had never known of until Roderick and King James had come.

He heard me through in silence, and then leaned over and rubbed his nose along my neck, in that gentle, sympathetic way that always had its effect upon me. Ah, what it is to have a friend like Wissihican to come to when you are in trouble!

"Dear old Raspberry," he said, and there were tears in his great, kind eyes, "are you really dissatisfied with your lot?—you, the finest little horse in the country, the pride of the ranch. If I were you, I would be the proudest, happiest horse in Idaho. Where is there a pony with your endurance and speed, who can throw a steer twice his weight, and round up a thousand head of cattle without a prick of the spur or a touch of the rein? What pony but you would have had the nerve and presence of mind without a rider to turn that band of cattle from pitching headlong over the Grand Round breaks? And what pony on the ranch would not give his right leg to be loved by Billy as you are, Raspberry? What do you suppose he cares for Roderick and King James?

Do you ever see him kiss *them* on the forehead, and give *them* sugar? When he and Bun (Bun is Billy's partner, and was his roommate at college) are talking about us horses, he says, as he looks at the thoroughbreds, 'There's a good-looking pair, Bunney,' but with you he throws both arms around your neck, and whispers little words I would die to receive, and says, 'Bunney, this is the dearest little horse in the world.' And the idea of your being hurt because he calls you Raspberry! Why, if he would call me Horse-fly or Mosquito in the tender way he calls you Raspberry, I would be the happiest horse in the world. And you jealous of them, Raspberry! Whom did Billy ride for the doctor that night Bun broke his arm? Raspberry. Whom does he always ride on the fall round-up? Raspberry. Whom does he always feed and rub down himself? Raspberry, while he hires a man to attend to the thoroughbreds. What do you suppose he will do with them pretty soon? *Sell* them to the highest bidder! Do you suppose he would sell *you*, Raspberry? Not for all the gold in Idaho; you and Brannagin (Brannagin is Billy's bull pup, and a great friend of mine) are his dearest possessions. Believe me, Raspberry, the life those horses lead is not all it looks to be on the surface. My cousin is a thoroughbred, as you know, and he has told me all about it, and said the greatest blessing I had was being born out here in the dear, wild West, where a horse had a chance to make a name for himself, in spite of his family or looks.

"What do you suppose you would have been back there in New York? Probably a car-horse tied to a heavy car, and beaten almost to death; while out here you are strong and healthy, and by far the superior in usefulness of the thoroughbreds."

My limbs twitched with eagerness and life, and my heart beat with the old-time pride and joy of living. I shot a glance of gratitude at Wissihican, and he smiled at me kindly.

I could not restrain myself any

longer, but leaped to my feet with a whinny of delight, and calling to Wissihican to follow, I dashed across the broad prairie at the top of my speed, kicking up my heels in a more coltish fashion than I had used for a long time.

From that day on I was never jealous of Roderick and King James, or ashamed of my name. In fact, I looked on them with pity, as I left them standing idly in the corral, when we ponies started off on the fall round-up. How I did enjoy those hard, wild rides gathering in the cattle for miles around, through the rough old Salmon River country! No one ever rode me but Billy, and never a cow got away from us in all that trip. It was great fun to see Brannagin run along and bite at their heels, turning them into the bunch again, and returning to us, with his self-satisfied air. Sometimes he would meet his match, and growl to me to come help him, and off I would dash, without leave from Billy, knowing well he trusted in my judgment, and with a rush and lunge from me, a bite from Brannagin, and a slash from Billy's quirt, the angry steer would turn with rage and fear, and bury himself in the midst of the vast herd, out of harm's way.

I was very sorry when the round-up was over, for I thought Billy would be going back to New York for awhile, and I would be turned out to pasture, with nothing to do.

"Oh, Wissihican," I said to my friend, "when Billy goes Bun will be riding you, and I shall be turned out all alone."

"Why, haven't you heard?" answered Wissihican joyfully. "Billy has some friends coming out, and is not going East this year; I heard him tell Bun so today."

This indeed was good news, and I never carried Billy to the post-office in such a short time as I did next morning, for I was anxious to learn who was coming.

I thought it might be Morley Sheldon, of New York, Billy's great

friend. I hoped it would be, he was such a fine fellow, and so gentle and clever in the management of his horses, and could doctor them as well as any farrier. Billy let him ride me, so I knew he must be all right.

This all passed through my mind as I stood out at the post, regaining my wind, and waiting for Billy to return with the mail.

Shortly he appeared with two letters, and as usual he read them aloud to me, as we loped easily homeward.

"Morley can't come, Raspberry," he said, as he gently stroked my nose. "He is going to Europe instead. But Gertrude and her mother are coming, Raspberry. Just think, Gertrude coming out to this God-forsaken country, just to visit me, and I'll have her all to myself! It's too good to be true!" And lifting the letter to his lips, he kissed it tenderly.

I was much disappointed to see Billy drive Roderick and King James down to meet Gertrude on the day of her arrival, as I wanted to be the first to greet her, but I suppose thirty miles was too much for her to ride the first day, and I had never been put to harness.

I hardly slept at all that night, so anxious was I to see Gertrude, and the next morning I was up and waiting in my accustomed place for sugar hours before Billy had arisen.

At last they came, Billy, Gertrude and Brannagin. The latter rushed out to meet me, barking something or other to me, but for once I paid no attention to his caresses, so interested was I in looking at Gertrude. How beautiful she was, tall and slim and dark, with quantities of fine black hair, and great, lovely brown eyes! A thoroughbred from the top of her head to the tip of her little patent-leather shoe; yet not such a thoroughbred as Roderick and King James, I thought, as I looked into her eyes, which were kind and sweet, without the cold, haughty look that the horses had.

"So this is Raspberry, that I've

heard so much about!" she said, smiling, as I came up; and if I had thought Raspberry a harsh name before, now I thought it the most beautiful name I had ever heard, pronounced as it was by the friendly, musical voice of Gertrude.

She came up and handed me a lump of sugar with one hand, and laying the other on my mane she put her face close to my neck and kissed me.

"Oh, you dear little horse!" she murmured; "you have such kind, human eyes, so different from the other horses I know. I am sure I shall love you very much, and I hope you will like me a little."

Dumb beasts! Yes, we are, and I am very sorry for it, for I longed to tell Gertrude how much I loved her already.

That afternoon I was saddled and brought up to the ranch, and there found Wissihican, with a side-saddle on, waiting for Gertrude.

What a fine ride we had down the old Lolo trail by the river, in the cool of a charming Western evening, with the glorious sunset of the plains lighting up the distant rugged hills, making them glow as I had never seen them glow before!

How well Gertrude looked in her neat-fitting habit, with Billy's great sombrero shading her lovely features! and how gracefully she sat to Wissihican's long, easy strides! No wonder Billy looked with such admiration, for she made a charming picture.

On, on we galloped, until the sun was hid behind the distant hills, and the great moon came up in the distance, out of the very plains, rising higher and brighter as we still kept on over the silent prairie.

"Oh, it is all so beautiful, Billy!" whispered Gertrude, as we slowed down to a walk.

"Yes," answered my rider, in the same low voice; "it is always beautiful, but never have I seen it so superbly grand as it is tonight. Do you blame me, Gertrude, for thinking about and wishing for this dear old place, and

peaceful life, when I am back in New York, amid the noise and bustle of city life? And yet, when I am here on my ranch in the long, cold winter nights, I sometimes get very lonely, and my heart yearns for the old life and the old faces."

"I don't blame you for feeling lonely, Billy," answered Gertrude, after a moment's pause. "But do you think your old friends are any happier than you are? Out here you learn to depend on yourself, and not on others, and you have freedom, pure air to breathe and wholesome food to eat. You are king of your own little realm, without the jealousies and meanness of the outside world. You have your books and your horses and dogs, which you love, and which love you," she said, leaning over and gently stroking my neck. "What more can you possibly want, Billy?"

He looked into her fine eyes with appreciation and sympathy, surprised at her views and the depth of feeling in her voice.

"You are right, Gertrude. I have all I should wish for, but I didn't suppose you would see things in the light I do, for I am a queer chap, caring more for dogs and horses than for most people, and preferring my rod or gun to a ball at a king's court."

I glanced at Wissihican and smiled. Wasn't that just what he had said to me, when I was discontented with my lot? Oh, if it would only have the effect upon Billy that it did upon me, how grateful I would be to Gertrude, for then Billy would live out here with me all the time, and I would be perfectly happy!

One day, when we had been for the mail, as usual, Billy got a letter which seemed to excite him greatly, and I was not kept waiting long for the contents.

"Gertrude," he said, "here's a letter from Morley Sheldon, who has returned from Europe. He's been in England, completing the arrangements for the International Polo Tournament, which comes off at Newport

this summer. You know he is captain of the American team. He says his polo ponies are all used up by the trip, and he has to pick up a new string, and wants me to help him. Now, where in the world am I going to find polo ponies, in this land of broncos and cayuses? The boy is crazy."

"Why, Billy," cried Gertrude, "there's Raspberry! He ought to make a dandy polo pony. Just think how he can run, and what wonderful endurance he has, and I am sure he has brains, if ever a horse had!"

"By George! I never thought of dear old Raspberry as a polo pony. But why shouldn't he be a good one? He ought to be able to follow the ball like a hound on the scent. Funny I never thought of that before, but somehow I never coupled Raspberry's name with polo. I'll get out my sticks and a ball, and try him in the corral tomorrow morning."

What was this polo thing? My curiosity was aroused, and I felt a little hurt at Billy's not thinking me good enough for it, whatever it was, for I had never failed Billy at anything.

The next morning Billy came out, and after giving me a fine rub-down he put on my light English saddle, instead of the heavy Mexican saddle that I used to throw steers with, and in place of his quirt he carried a long stick, somewhat like a crop, but it was longer and had a cross-piece on the end. But I wasn't afraid, for Billy never touched me with the quirt, so I knew the great stick was not for me.

He rode me out in the corral, and turned out all the other horses, but they stood around the outside to watch me. I came near losing my temper again when I heard the sneering laughter of the thoroughbreds as they saw me.

"Well, by my grandsire, King Arthur, if Raspberry isn't going to play polo!" said Roderick in amazement. "He'll be aspiring to the International Match before long." And they both laughed again.

So polo had something to do with quality, after all! But Billy had not mentioned looks or breeding, only speed, endurance and brains! Ah, I would show these proud aristocrats, and Billy, and Gertrude, and all of them, that I could be useful!

Billy took off the top rails of the corral and laid them around in a circle—"boundary," he called it. Then my first lesson commenced. He threw a little white ball on the ground, and leaning over my right side, hit it with his stick. Away it flew, over the grass, and Billy gave me the old signal he used to give when I was to turn a stray cow back into the herd, and away I went after the little ball, as hard as though I were chasing a wild steer.

While it was still rolling Billy leaned over my left side and with a back-handed blow sent the ball back again, and pulled me around very quickly. This time he missed it, and pulled me up as suddenly as though he had roped a steer. Then, leaning back, he hit it squarely.

"Well stopped, little horse!" said Billy, patting my neck. "You'll make a crackerjack polo pony, or I am mistaken."

Every day we went through the same thing, and I tried very hard to do just as Billy told me, for Gertrude was always there encouraging me, and I wanted to show her that she had not put faith in me in vain. I grew to watch the ball and turn and follow without the rein, just as I did with the cattle; and when Billy missed the ball I knew I was to stop just as suddenly as I did when I heard the whistle of the lariat.

At the end of a month Billy wrote Morley Sheldon that he had a fine pony for him, and would bring him East. It was very hard saying good-bye to Wissihican. He trotted along by the fence down to the old gate at the corner, and kept calling to me as long as he could hear the sound of my feet.

I was put in a fine box-stall car, much handsomer than I had ever seen,

and for days I was hurried East in this car; but I did not mind it much, for I could see out, and was quite comfortable, and Billy and Gertrude came in to visit me very often, and gave me sugar.

At last we came to a stop, and Morley Sheldon jumped into my car. "What! old Raspberry's your pony, is he, Billy?" he cried, as he saw me. "Well, if he's as good at polo as he is at cow-punching he'll be a peach."

Billy fairly beamed, and I was very happy, for we all were afraid Morley would condemn me without a trial, as I was such a peculiar-looking beast, and he was so particular. But it was just like him, and I determined then and there to do or die for his sake.

I was taken out to Morley's home, somewhere in New Jersey, I think it was, where I had the most beautiful quarters I had ever seen, and the finest bran mash and oats to eat, and clean, soft straw on which to lie.

There were a lot of other ponies of about my size in the stable, each with a large box-stall like mine—sleek, cleanly built little horses, with beautifully arched and glossy necks. I thought of my poor neck, and was backward about speaking to them, for though I was not jealous of their kind any more, I felt a little ashamed of my appearance among all these aristocrats.

However, when I heard them discussing the great International Match I thrust aside my scruples and joined in the conversation.

When I told them I was the new pony Morley had brought from Idaho you should have heard them!

"What! *you* a polo pony!" came from the stall next to mine, a horse I had especially admired for his beauty. "I thought you had come to roll the field."

"Looks more like a hobby-horse," said a handsome chestnut mare, as she put her head over the rail and eyed me coldly and critically. I only smiled good-naturedly, and went on eating my oats. I would await my time and show them a thing or two!

Early the next morning Billy,

Morley and Gertrude came down to see me, and I was saddled and taken out to a beautiful field as smooth and level as the stable floor, with short, cool grass and soft, springy turf, which felt delicious to my feet. It was inclosed by low white boards, which were to turn the ball, like the rails in the corral at home. But oh, how much faster I could run on the level, springy sod! And how lightly, easily, gracefully Morley sat and guided me!

"My gad, Billy, that pony is a wonder!" cried Morley enthusiastically, as he rode me up to the rails where Billy and Gertrude were standing. "You've done wonders with him in such a short time; he turns and stops like a veteran, and I never was carried so fast on a horse before." And away we ran again to the centre of the field. After a few minutes' hard playing I was taken back to the stables, and I heard Morley say: "He's got an eye like a hawk for the ball, Billy, and follows without the reins."

"That's from his cow-punching experience," answered Billy proudly, and I was repaid for my efforts.

The next month I worked as I had never worked before. The fall round-up was colt's play compared with it.

Soon I was put into the practice games, and learned the different positions and duties of the other horses, when to ride them off, and when to break in the open field.

That's what I loved. Morley would make a long, clean stroke with his mallet—he played a forward—and away we would dash, and not a horse on the field could overtake us.

It was glorious sport, and put my muscles in splendid condition. I never grew tired, and was always sorry when the change was made, for I could easily stand a whole game; but I suppose Morley knew best, so I did not complain.

The night before the match arrived at last, and I was taken to a place called Newport in a special car, and had a man just to take care of me.

He was continually rubbing me down and blanketing and unblanketing me, until my legs fairly twitched with my eagerness to be moving; but I was put in a large, padded box-stall, and Billy and Gertrude and Morley all came to see me, and patted and kissed me, and told me to go to sleep and prepare for the morrow. Gertrude stroked my face and whispered to me to be brave and true, and to play as I had never played before for the sake of dear old Idaho. Morley walked silently around me, feeling my legs and sides, and looking at my mouth and feet, while Billy just said: "Do your best, little horse," and I knew by his voice that he trusted me.

Sleep! No, I did not sleep a wink; I did not need to, I did not want to. I wanted to play all night and all day, I was so anxious and excited. Would morning *never* come?

At last the sun came out, and with it came the grooms. They walked me up and down, and gave my legs a special shampooing, and put new leather leggings on my legs, nearly up to my knees, for protection. As if I needed protection! Then I was led out to the beautiful grounds, with the other ponies.

They treated me with greater respect now, as I had shown them what I was worth. Twice I had knocked that proud pony clean over on his side in practice, and hence his respect.

As I was led slowly around the grounds I had a good opportunity to see the strange and beautiful sight. Soon the place was alive with horses throwing out their legs and showing their paces, as they were trotted about by their respective grooms.

I watched this, my first glimpse of "high life," with great interest. A crowd of grooms and stable-boys were collected around the rails on one side, while opposite, the grandstand was already filling with handsome men and sweet-looking girls, with soft white dresses and brightly colored hats and parasols. All around the grounds were those big red-and-brass automobiles, which scared me so at first; and

breaks, drags, coaches and smart-looking carriages of every description, filled with richly dressed men and women, and drawn by great, beautiful horses, whose shiny black and bay satin-like skins shone and glistened in the sunlight.

Suddenly my heart began to beat with great, proud, loving throbs, for with horns blowing merrily, and chains rattling, in drove a beautiful coach, drawn by four proud-looking, well-built horses, who champed at their bits and pawed the ground, as they were brought to a standstill by Billy. Straight and tall and beautiful, by his side sat Gertrude, all in white, her lovely face flushed with the excitement of it all. No wonder everyone stared!

And between them sat dear old Brannagin, with the same serious, comical expression on his wrinkled face, as unconcerned as though he were going for a trot on the ranch, instead of being at the great polo match at Newport!

Morley, already in polo outfit, sat on the back seat with some ladies; but he soon made his way toward me. He looked me over thoroughly, in his businesslike way, and, seemingly satisfied, moved on to his other ponies.

Billy and Gertrude came over to me, and tried to quiet my nerves by gentle pats and loving words.

"Morley says he is going to save you for the last part of the game, little horse," said Billy, putting his arms around my neck and laying his face against mine. "Do, do play the game, for my sake, for Gertrude's, and the old ranch," he whispered. I was grateful for his words, but oh, *why* couldn't I play the whole game! As if I couldn't stand *ten* games straight, the way I was feeling! What! those English and Kentucky-bred horses, brought up on the luxury of the land, stand as much as I, who had faced blizzards and all sorts of weather, and punched cows twenty-four consecutive hours, without food or water! Oh! *why* wouldn't they understand!

I had little time for regret, however, for just then the whistle blew, and I

raised my head to see the umpire throw the ball among the players. With a rush of hoofs and a clatter of sticks the game was on.

Oh, the agony of that first half, standing there idle, with every nerve twitching and aching to be in action, and not being able to help!

I closed my eyes and groaned, as I saw Morley passed by an Englishman, and the ball taken right out of his hands by a neat, back-handed stroke of the opposite forward. That never would have happened with me. Oh, what a splendid drive! Dear old Morley, he had made a beautiful back-handed stroke clean between the posts. How the crowd did cheer, and I couldn't help feeling jealous of the little pony he rode, for he *had* turned very well.

Then the luck went against us, and in an incredibly short time the English had run up two goals, and the whistle blew, with the score two to one against us.

"I'm clean blowed," panted Morley's horse, as he rode in with bloodshot eyes and drooping head. "I'm afraid we are licked. We can't hold out against those ponies." I laughed in his face in my excitement, and was disgusted with the hopeless look in his dull eyes. I would show them if we couldn't hold out!

The whistle blew again, and I hardly heard the message from Billy and Gertrude, as Morley sprang lightly into the saddle and we hurried into the field. Morley's hand was light on the rein, and he was as cool and steady as ever. My limbs stopped trembling, and I took the bit firmly in my teeth. If he could be cool, so could I.

I noticed the triumphant, contemptuous smile of the English horses, and my blood boiled. Would the whistle *never* blow!

At last! With a leap that would have done credit to my old bucking days I was after the ball, and Morley, giving it a clean, powerful stroke, turned me down the field in hot pursuit. I galloped as fast as I could put my feet to the ground, the wind filling my eyes with tears; but I could still

dimly see the ball shooting straight for the posts, with only one back between it and a sure goal. I saw him take a steady aim from a standstill—and miss; but the pony knew what he was about. He took it square on his unguarded back leg, and it glanced to the right just as we came rushing down. No need of the rein to turn me—I was watching the ball. Like a flash I turned almost in the air and was beside the ball, to the left of it. I slowed down a trifle as I heard the whizz of the mallet as it cut the air, just as the lariat used to whistle in the old days. I felt Morley's legs straighten and grow tight to my sides as he arose slightly from the saddle. Crash! went the mallet, and the ball went humming through the grass with a whirl like the rise of partridges, clean between the posts!

The yell that followed sounded like the distant roaring of thunder to my excited ears, and I thought I heard Brannagin bark, but I wasn't sure. As we trotted back to the centre of the field I could hear the men and women praising me and noticed the looks of envy and admiration on the faces of the other ponies, but all with equal indifference. I was all for the game—nothing else counted. I had not even warmed up yet. Why did we stop at all for time? Why not play on until all but one dropped dead, and see who could stay the longest, English thoroughbreds or Western cow-ponies?

The whistle blew again, and this time they tried to block me. Smash I went into my opponent, and I felt him stagger with the shock; but it spoiled Morley's aim. Then it was here and there, first at one end of the field and then at the other, Morley and I always in the thick of it. My blood was up at last, and, with every nerve and muscle on the strain and my eye always on the ball, I seemed to be all over the field at once.

Once I saw the ball come whizzing out of the bunch, and I put out my leg and took it fairly in the shin, exulting in the pain. Morley turned in the saddle and gave it a long stroke, back-handed, and it was taken up by

our forwards and again sent between the posts.

Another roar of voices, and as I was returning slowly on the south side I saw Gertrude lean far out from the coach and, with tears streaming out of her beautiful eyes, she cried: "God bless you, Raspberry, you dear old horse!" and Billy just looked too overcome and excited to speak. My heart fairly leaped with pride, and I wanted to cry, with the joy and excitement of it all.

Again the whistle, and this time two horses blocked my first rush, and I lost sight of the ball amid the mass of hoofs and mallets. Morley held me on the outside, though I wanted to rush in and find it.

Suddenly it shot out, spinning and twisting with the force of a one-sided blow, straight toward our goal. With a rush the whole field was after it, but we had a good length's start. I heard the pat, pat of their feet on the solid ground, like hail on the old barn roof, as they came tearing after me. I expected a back-handed stroke from Morley at full speed, but instead he slowed me up and began nursing the ball around the right end by little, short, easy strokes. The whole crowd turned and made to send us off.

Then for the first time Morley touched the spurs to me, lightly but firmly. I nearly jumped from under him in response, and ran as I had never run before. He hit the ball a sharp little tap straight at the advancing horses, and again touched me with the spurs. I gave a leap that I thought would surely land us in the midst of the advancing horses; but quick as a flash Morley rose high in his stirrups, and, with a broad, powerful stroke of his stick, he took the ball fairly underneath. Up it rose like a grouse taken unawares, and with the speed of a bullet sailed clear over the heads of the advancing horsemen, who gave a shout of surprise and alarm. But it cleared them all, and, striking the ground, shot clean and true between the posts. Even I was thunderstruck. I had never seen a stroke like it before, and

doubt if anyone but Morley could have done it; but perhaps I am wrong. The whistle blew before we could return, and the game was over. We had won!

Then such shouting and tooting of horns I never heard. The great crowd had gone mad with delight. I stood dazed and blinking, while thousands rushed upon the field and, literally tearing Morley from my back, bore him off in triumph on their shoulders, while a hundred hands patted and admired me; but I paid little attention, for Billy and Gertrude had arrived. They kissed me as if they had not seen me for years, and Gertrude stroked my neck in her old, kind way; and men and women stood around, saying things about me that were enough to turn the head of a simple Western cayuse.

Oh, if Roderick and King James had only seen me then!

"Dear old Raspberry," said Billy, as he threw a great warm blanket over me with his own hands, "I knew you would do it! Western pluck and grit have triumphed over Eastern blood and training. You will start a new era in polo, or I am mightily mistaken."

"Do you want to sell that horse, Billy?" asked a tall, good-looking fellow in polo clothes of my master. "I'll give you four thousand for him, cash down."

My heart sank. Would Billy sell me? Would I never see the old ranch, or Wissihican again, or Billy, or Ger-

trude? But I ought to have known Billy better.

"Sell Raspberry!" he answered, smiling faintly. "Oh, no, Jack, all the money in Newport wouldn't buy him! Why, he won me nearly that much today; but if he had lost I wouldn't think of selling him, any more than I would of selling one of my own family. We in the West think more of our horses than you Easterners do, Jack."

"Going to let Morley use him then, I suppose," answered Jack, rather enviously.

"No, I think not," replied Billy slowly. "He has done his duty nobly, and now I am going to take him back West, where he is just a cow-pony. He would never thrive here at this sort of life; he would fall off in no time, while out there he has many more years; and besides, I can't spare him."

"You surely are not going back to that God-forsaken country, are you, Billy?" asked Jack in surprise.

Billy looked across at Gertrude. She gave one long, sweet look in return and, dropping her eyes, nodded, blushing slightly.

"Yes," answered Billy, with a happy, far-away note in his voice, and I felt the throb and pressure of hands as they met in my mane an instant.

Brannagin jumped up, with a joyful bark, and kissed me on the nose. Did he, too, understand?



## A TOAST

HERE'S to the lying lips we meet,  
For truthful lips are bores;  
But lying lips are very sweet  
When lying close to yours!

R. G. SMITH.



NEVER put off until tomorrow those whom you can do today.

# THE BURNT-OFFERING

By Clinton Dangerfield

HE prided himself on not being superstitious, yet it gave him a slight sense of discomfort that they two should be quite alone together in the little country cottage—now that of her there remained only that composed, motionless figure with the paper clasped in its icy fingers.

He saw his own name on the message she guarded so carefully even in death, and he reflected that in all likelihood it was nothing but written reproaches because he had not come as soon as she sent for him. Apparently she had sent for no one else. She had asked no nurse in her last illness, but had died in solitude, with only this note to speak for her.

With some difficulty, and frowning, he drew the paper away; but as he followed the badly scrawled lines his face flushed eagerly and, unconsciously, he read aloud:

"Rex," [it began] "this paper contains an important secret, the last we two shall ever have together. Whether I speak the truth you may judge beforehand by the past years, in which I have never told you the shadow of a lie—"

"That is so," muttered the man. "She didn't know anything about lying. And at first she thought the whole world told the truth. That's why it was so easy to— But bah! what's the use of raking that up?"

He read on:

"Rex, the day I found out our marriage was no marriage at all, the day I begged you on my knees to right me—that day I came into a fortune, though I never said so to you.

"The devil she did!" ejaculated the man, hurrying on.

"I would not tell you, Rex, because I no longer trusted you. I would have been no

dowerless bride. I would have brought you a great sum of money. But I didn't care to buy a ring, even if I could. Unless you married me from a sense of justice it would still have been no marriage. So I took all my money; I had it changed into bank-notes, and I hid it—and hid it well.

"Surely she's not going to be mean enough to tell me that and nothing more," muttered the man; but the note continued:

"Last week, when I grew so ill, I had a dream. In it a voice said to me, 'God will forgive you yet, if you can save the soul of your worst enemy.' And, of course, I knew that meant you, Rex, and I wondered and wondered how to save you—to save us both—and at last I knew. I understood that if you could surmount a great temptation there would be hope for us—hope and forgiveness.

"What is she driving at?" gasped the man, in alarm, as though the dead could answer him. Then he resumed his reading, aloud, as though his ears as well as his eyes must testify to this strange message.

"You remember, Rex, how, when the cellar was rebuilt six months ago under my direction, you grumbled at the bill for repairs. And I stopped you by saying that the walls had to be made thicker in the corner where I built my preserve-closet, to keep out the cold, you know. And when I told you it was to save the preserves you didn't grumble any more. You paid the bill—you were always fond of sweets. Well, that preserve-closet was really my treasure-chamber. In a little niche in the wall of it, the wall of the south corner, Rex, I hid my riches—which might have been yours, too.

"They'll be mine now!" shouted the man, in a frenzy of delight. "Better now than when she was alive—for there will be no one claiming a share. I'll spend it for you, old girl—and spend it royally, too!"

He rushed on with the reading, impatient to be gone in search of the treasure:

"The key to the little niche" [pursued the letter] "is—but stay—before you ever take that key in your hands, Rex, this is what I ask you to do: You must swear, here on my dead body, that you will never open the niche, Rex, nor try in any way to possess that money."

"Was she mad?" muttered the man.

"When I am buried you must, with your own hands, set fire to this little cottage—this cottage which cost you so little and which has been my world for five bitter years. And when this house lies in ashes, and with it the fortune which might have been yours had you stooped to refuse the request of the dead, then the greatness of your manhood will wipe out our sin and God will forgive you the treachery to me, and me for not having left you when that treachery was proved."

A frightful oath rose to the man's lips and choked him into reading to himself.

"This money shall be a burnt-offering, Rex—to God for our purification—destroyed as it shall be of your own free will. For it is wholly in your hands, Rex. You are quite alone here—nothing could prevent your seizing it if you chose."

The man laughed as he read.

"Fool!" he whispered harshly. "Mad fool that she was!"

"And for the key, Rex," [continued the lines] "draw my gown aside from my breast and you will find the key lying there. Take it, remembering that if with this key in your hands you leave the niche unopened, then there shall be peace for us two. But if you go and take the money—which might have been a bride's dower—then I, who shall not yet have gone to my deserved place, will be there in spirit to watch you and to rejoice as you rejoice."

There was no more.

He crushed the paper in nervous fingers, and stared again at his dead. Unruffled and altogether serene she lay there, and yet with something of the awful austerity of a just judge prepared by his coming action to condemn or forgive.

He drew aside her white gown and took the little key from its resting-place on her naked breast. Touching her thrilled him terribly and unexpectedly. He even bent over her and stared fiercely into her calm face to see if her woman's wiles might not

be tricking him. But no—the seal of eternal silence was on those lips, whose sweetness he had once rifled. And death had not made her beautiful. Her beauty had faded in life and remained faded now. Yet in that immobile countenance he vaguely felt a power never on it before, and wavering he stood beside her, fingering the key.

The strangeness of his situation woke in him what he never thought to feel again—the shadowy, troublous stirrings of the underlying quality we call conscience, lacking a clearer name. He himself would have given it no such title. He had forged one for it long ago, and boldly called it weakness—mere weakness which stands between a man and pleasure, between a man and success. He resented it now, and found himself regarding it as impartially and as analytically as though it had quivered in someone else.

"You couldn't expect me to turn absolute idiot, just for your caprices, my girl," he said defiantly to the woman's form. "You've been clever enough with your letter—but what is such a letter, after all? It was born of brain centres that are no more now than the dust under my heel."

He rubbed the key absently against his cuff.

"It ought to be revenge enough for you that you've shaken me; you've stirred up the superstition in me that sleeps in every man. Doesn't that satisfy you?"

There was, of course, no answer. He walked to the table and took up the lamp burning there.

"I might wait until after her funeral. And meanwhile some long-nosed scamp would smell out the money and steal it. There's no safety in such a hiding-place."

He went slowly toward the door. Once he halted and looked back; but no sign of warning came from the quietly folded hands. Again he went forward, but as his grasp was almost on the knob the lamp he carried went out, not quickly but deliberately, as though

the flame had been steadily drawn from its base. The room lay in utter darkness.

The man gave a cry of horror. Then, pulling himself together, he managed, with shaking fingers, to find a match and relight the lamp, expecting to see some invisible force blow it violently out. He set it on the table and watched it, the cold sweat drops standing on his forehead. But the wick burned clearly, and even radiantly. His composure came back to him. A swaggering pride in his own resolution upheld him as he lifted the lamp again.

He sighed with relief when he found that it did not offer to go out. When he closed the door of the death chamber after him he laughed outright.

"Damnation!" he said. "How close I came to making an ass of myself—just for a flaw in that wick! And could money come at a better time? That unlucky gamble in shares last week has left me penniless. Fancy me scratching for bare existence with a fortune directly under my nose! Trust a woman for asking impossible things!"

He had no doubt that the sum, and a very large one, was there. To live long with a sincere nature is an education in one way. He had, perforce, learned from this woman that there was, in some natures, such a quality as truth. She seemed incapable of deception. He was eager, almost frantic, to feel the touch of the bills in his hands, to let them slip between his fingers, to feed the lust of possession by absolute sight.

Down the cellar stairs he went steadily. The lamp threw grotesque shadows into a wavering relief. Once he could have sworn he saw arms outstretched, as though to clasp him; but it was only a shade cast by an irregular pile of wood.

Rats scuttled away at his coming. One of them, unaccountably slow in moving, was trodden on by his boot heel. The creature, gray, wicked-eyed, repellent, curled up and bit him through the upper leather.

Now he reached the preserve-closet itself. The broad, heavy oaken door was curiously thick and solid—unquestionably to keep an even temperature within.

He shot back the iron bolt fastening it, and as he did so a huge wood-spider ran halfway down the door toward him, as though to charge his intrusive fingers. It looked like the spawn of some nightmare as it defied him, and must have been cousin german to a tarantula in its hairy hideousness, its bloated body pendulous from crooked, aggressive legs. The man struck at it viciously and, its courage vanishing, it fled. With an oath he flung open the closet door and walked in, setting the lamp on a convenient shelf.

Nothing was visible at first sight but two placid, well-filled jars of preserves. Yet suddenly it seemed to him that the rich ruby of the raspberries was not innocuous fruit, but clotted blood. He turned his back on the shelves and stared at the south corner.

A plank leaned carelessly against the wall. He moved it hurriedly away. The act revealed the locked door of the little niche.

He dropped on one knee and fitted the key exultantly into the lock. To think that he should have wavered when the reaching of the niche was so simple a thing! He glanced back and defied the raspberries, as though the near presence of the money brought something healing, and he triumphed to see that they no longer looked unnatural. Then, with swift, unerring fingers, he turned the key.

With a sharp click, the niche door flew violently open, slapping back against the wall as though he had set some strong spring in motion. But he cared little for the mechanism of the lock. It was open—and there lay hundreds of bank-notes, in neat little packages. Their value would, a cursory glance told him, run far into the thousands.

"Eureka!" he cried, springing up, a roll of notes in his hand. "To the

devil with all fools who listen to the whinings of fear!"

But, with the words on his lips, a sudden terror shot into his face, though an incredulous scorn of his fancy at first mingled with it. He turned and at a bound launched himself against the large closet door which quietly, noiselessly and wholly unaccountably—had closed.

In his first and unreasoning panic he rammed his shoulder against it with the force of a madman, battering and bruising his muscles; but in vain. Then he snatched up the plank and beat the door so wildly that the stout board which he held broke into a dozen pieces, and one of them shivered the burning lamp. Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, for him, it did not explode, but merely left him again in darkness, the precious oil draining out upon the floor.

He screamed aloud, so much did the incident unnerve him, and again battered the door with his shoulder.

Forced to give this up, his cunning reason at last reasserted itself and told him that some connection with the little door's opening had closed the larger one.

To this end he lighted a match, and setting fire to the roll of bills recklessly made a torch of them, and held the light searchingly around the niche. He soon saw that the large door had been controlled by a narrow copper wire, passing through a pin-hole in the wall. Part of it still hung trailing from the wall, and joyfully he seized it. With this he could draw back the shot bolt.

He pulled, cautiously and carefully. The wire yielded at once, and came off in his grasp. Whatever the connection had been it was wholly snapped.

A fresh access of terror drove him into temporary madness. A fresh return of reason set him intelligently to work—striving, planning, digging.

So day dawned outside—and found him still digging, though he knew noth-

ing of the day. So night returned and discovered him, though in his darkness it was already night.

Fluctuating like a pendulum between extremes—between insanity brought on by sheer wild terror and sanity restored through the instinct of reason still in him—he either battered himself into exhaustion or labored with intelligent zeal for freedom.

And if he had had sustaining food he might yet have dug his way to the prized outer world, might yet have passed mockingly the sleeping figure upstairs, of whom none knew but him. But the two slender jars of raspberries, carefully as he hoarded them, were soon quite empty. Some faint rift of air under the door alone remained to him, but even a chameleon doesn't endure merely on air.

There came a day when he screamed like a terrified child for food; screamed to the woman upstairs whose hands had so often set dainty meals before him, and, receiving no answer to his cries, went mad in earnest.

For now he thought he had never entered the cellar; but somehow she had put the money into his possession, and, of his own free will, he was ready to make burnt-offering.

So he gathered, in the darkness, every bill out of the niche, and piled them in the centre of the floor. To these, with feeble fingers, he set fire, and the blaze leaped up cheerily; crackling, snapping, blowing warm against his white and haggard face.

It shimmered on the gray sandstone walls of his living tomb; it flashed light into the empty and despoiled niche. He stared at the dancing flames with silly and vacuous eyes.

Then, as suddenly as it had arisen, the fire fell to feathery ashes—to total darkness.

But the man made no outcry at its death. He was lying motionless and senseless on the stone floor, his bare hands turning their withered and torn palms vainly upward.



## AT THE ROAD'S TURNING

HERE at the further verge of youth  
Where the cool road I know  
Forsakes the lovely, idle green  
For the long hill whose height no man has seen,  
Turning away from morning and the south:  
Here in the little precious *now*—ah, why,  
Before I go,  
Shall I not slip aside and live awhile—  
Live for the dew in the grass, the dear friend's smile,  
The tranquil glory of uncounted days—  
For the stars, and silence and June dawns aglow?

Oh, strange, dear place!  
Oh, dear, strange, changing sky!  
Oh, lovely fleeting hour and hastening stream!  
There will be no revisiting, when I  
Am gone away to follow deed and dream  
And brave desire, calling many ways.  
And so—no wrong,  
If, with the sun in my face,  
The song at my lip and heart divinely young,  
I tarry this last wondering, sunny mile  
Out of my youth, and, tarrying, live awhile.

MILDRED I. McNEAL.



## COULDN'T ANSWER BOTH TOGETHER

GERALDINE—Am I the only girl you ever kissed—the only girl you ever asked to marry you?

GERALD—I wish you would separate those questions.



## SHE CAN, THAT'S A FACT

BOYCE—Why does a woman give so much attention to dress? Is it because she wants to attract men or because she desires to outshine her sister women?

MRS. BOYCE—Can't a woman do two things at once?

## LOVE'S WORLD

IF the year be at her spring  
 I neither know nor care;  
 I have the bird-song of your speech,  
 The warm rain of your hair.  
 I question not if thrushes sing,  
 If roses load the air;  
 Beyond my heart I need not reach  
 When all is summer there.

I go not by the blue above,  
 By grasses green or sere;  
 Your silences, your sigh, your smile,  
 They mark my time o' year.  
 Its own brave wonder-world has love;  
 So fair it is, I fear  
 Sometimes 'twill fade and go the while  
 I look upon you, dear.

JOHN VANCE CHENEY.



## WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK

REPORTER—Were you badly injured when the automobile ran over you?  
 EX-FOOTBALL PLAYER—Oh, no, but the blamed old machine had just  
 been painted and I've got to have my suit cleaned.



## THEY'RE BELOW PAR

BRIGGS—Made a bad investment, did he? What in?  
 SKAGGS—Titled son-in-law.



IT seems to be a great comfort to a man who is jealous of his wife's first husband to think how jealous the other fellow would be if he knew.

# MON PETIT VOISIN

Par Marcel Prévost

20 DÉCEMBRE, 19—  
**M**ALGRÉ toute ma philosophie de vieille fille résignée, — bientôt trente ans de philosophie, — je suis obligée de convenir avec moi-même que les choses ne sont pas pour le mieux dans ce monde, ou, du moins, que le meilleur des mondes possibles ne me gêne pas. D'abord, il fait froid: "huit dessous," comme dit mon voisin de palier, gamin de vingt-six ans qui finit sa troisième année d'Ecole-des-Mines et martèle, d'un terrible accent gascon, son argot scolaire. J'ouvre mon journal, et je lis:

"Les patineurs sont dans la joie; on assure que cette basse température va se maintenir..."

Le journal néglige de renseigner ses lecteurs sur l'état d'âme des pauvres institutrices telles que moi à l'annonce de cette bonne nouvelle. J'ai envie de lui écrire, au journal, que huit degrés au-dessous, pendant quinze jours, c'est quinze jours de mon poêle à grande vitesse, soit cinquante centimes de surcharge quotidienne à mon budget, soit sept francs cinquante au total: le prix d'un chapeau neuf. Mon Dieu! oui, un chapeau d'hiver, — que je fais moi-même, bien entendu, — me revient à peu près à ce prix-là.

Il y a le froid et il y a le chômage. C'est curieux comme les Anglo-Saxons tiennent peu à apprendre la langue de Voltaire cette année! Quant aux Français d'aujourd'hui, à partir de l'âge de cinq ans, ils savent tous l'anglais, paraît-il; ils l'ont appris avec une bonne suisse. Or, moi, si l'on me sort de l'anglais, du français et d'un pianotage inoffensif, je suis au bout de ma science. Que voulez-vous? On ne

m'avait pas élevée pour être institutrice. Je suis la demoiselle dont les parents ont eu des revers de fortune dans l'industrie. Ça n'offre plus aucun intérêt dans les romans. Dans la vie, ça marque tout de même, croyez-moi!

Mes moyens d'existence, pour l'instant, consistent en une dame de Montevideo très-jolie, mais dépourvue de tout penchant pour l'étude. D'ailleurs, elle ne tient pas à parler couramment le français, m'a-t-elle dit tout de suite. Elle me fait traduire et s'exerce à bien prononcer des phrases dans ce goût (je me suis aperçue que je comprends parfaitement l'uruguayen):

— Vous avez de jolis yeux bleus et une belle barbe blonde...

— N'oubliez pas que j'ai une grosse note chez le tapissier et chez la couturière...

Je ne veux pas songer à l'usage qu'elle fera de ce bagage linguistique.

Ah! dame — comme dit mon petit voisin Jean Ducasse, — il faut bien payer le "propre" et le "restau"!...

Je l'entends qui rentre, mon voisin. Pauvre gamin! Ces jours-ci, comme il revenait sur une "impériale" de tramway, de l'Ecole-des-Mines à notre rue Gît-le-Cœur, il a pris un rhume. Il tousse! il tousse! Quand il a toussé devant moi, il s'écrie, en se frappant sur le thorax:

— Hein! Quel creux! Un de vos Parisiens serait déjà mort!...

C'est ainsi qu'il envisage tous les incidents de la vie. Cléments ou hostiles, ils lui sont matière à glorifier la Gascogne et lui-même. Plus il fait froid, plus il triomphe.

— En voilà un sale climat! clame-t-il en se frottant les mains; chez nous,

aujourd'hui, je parie qu'on ne peut pas seulement garder le gilet.

D'ailleurs, il déclare qu'il ne souffre nullement du froid. Si on le poussait, il "quitterait le gilet" pour prouver son indifférence aux intempéries. Jamais de feu dans sa chambre: il est bien trop paresseux pour en faire! Il vient étudier ses cours à côté de mon poêle. A chaque instant, il les dépose et me conte les histoires de son Ecole. Il parle d'affilée, imitant la voix des personnes, comme s'il lisait un dialogue. Dans tous ses récits, il y a un professeur "collé" par un élève. Le professeur varie; mais l'élève, c'est toujours Jean Ducasse.

Il est bien gentil tout de même, gai, bavard, la figure finement dessinée, comme au burin...

Il ne va pas tarder à frapper à ma porte. Arrangeons un peu nos cheveux et changeons de blouse. On a beau être une vieille institutrice, il ne faut pas faire peur aux enfants.

22 décembre.

Décidément, rien ne va plus! Voilà que j'ai perdu la dame de Montevideo. Elle a disparu, hier, de son appartement de la rue Bocador, enlevée par un monsieur, "officier de la Légion-d'Honneur," m'a dit la concierge. Avant de partir, elle a réglé scrupuleusement tous ses comptes. Elle n'a oublié que l'institutrice... Dix-huit francs, qu'elle me devait!... Ils vont manquer à mes étrennes, les dix-huit francs!

Je me faisais une fête d'acheter une jolie cravate à mon petit voisin, qui ne sait pas s'habiller.

Jean Ducasse continue à crier, à tousser et à mettre la vie en dialogues; ce matin, comme il se rendait à l'Ecole, il a entr'ouvert ma porte sans frapper (il devient vraiment un peu familier) et il a crié triomphalement, par la fente:

— Hé! bé! il a encore baissé de deux, le cochon!...

Sauf respect, le "cochon," c'était le thermomètre.

Croirait-on que ce petit dévergondé, tout en me faisant des galanteries (qui

me valent seulement de rire, vous pensez bien!), a tenté, ces jours-ci, de cent manières, de m'extorquer l'adresse de la dame de Montevideo! Je vais la lui donner tout à l'heure. Il ira se casser le nez rue Bocador.

Nous passons notre temps à nous faire des niches, comme deux enfants. Lui en est un. Mais moi?...

23 décembre.

Controverse avec Jean Ducasse, tantôt, sur Noël. Pour moi, née dans les parages d'Hazebrouck, Noël est, par excellence, la fête de l'année—plus que le premier de l'An, plus que Pâques même. Jean parle de Noël avec indifférence. Enfant, il n'a jamais mis ses souliers dans la cheminée. Une ou deux fois dans sa vie, il a assisté à la messe de minuit; après, on mangeait une "estouffat" avec quelques "cruchades." Ce Gascon ignore la poésie grave, touchante, tendre et plantureuse de notre Noël du Nord.

Je voulais lui faire mettre, demain, ses souliers dans la cheminée; je me proposais d'y glisser la cravate que j'ai réussi à acheter pour lui tout de même. (A mon âge, je puis bien entrer chez lui quand il dort!) Il a refusé de se prêter à "cette pratique superstitieuse."

Impossible de noter phonétiquement comment il prononce "superstitieuse."

Ce dédain de toute superstition ne l'empêche pas de vivre en pleine chimère. J'ai dû écouter, tout à l'heure, une histoire d'une invraisemblance hurlante: une tante "du pays"—son pays, naturellement—très riche, "au moins quarante mille francs d'argent, et de la terre," qui vient de mourir, "la pauvre femme," et dont l'héritage va, naturellement, échoir à Jean. Muni de ce viatique, mon voisin laissera l'Ecole-des-Mines, "parce que les diplômes, au fond, c'est une blague!" il voyagera un an ou deux, et s'en retournera, finalement, dans son pays, faire valoir la terre. Il lui fera rendre le "vingt pour cent," grâce à ses connaissances scientifiques! Toute cette rêvasserie

m'est débitée du ton le plus sérieux, voire le plus grave.

Pourtant, il finit par une pirouette, comme toujours :

— Et quand je reviendrai de voyage pour retourner au pays, belle Hortense, je passerai vous prendre rue Gît-le-Cœur, et nous nous marierons !

Il essaye de m'embrasser la joue, attrape le bas de mon chignon, et se sauve pour éviter une bonne calotte... Quel gosse!... Puis-je me fâcher?...

Pour obtenir son pardon, il promet, le mécréant, d'assister à la messe de minuit avec moi.

Après quoi, nous réveillonnerons ensemble au "Bouillon."

25 décembre.

Ah! bien, oui! La messe de minuit! Le réveillon au restaurant! Il s'en est passé des choses, rue Gît-le-Cœur, des deux côtés du palier, depuis avant-hier!... Les chimères de Jean ne m'auront pas tourné la tête, au moins, et je ne rêve pas tout éveillée?... Mais non. Les objets, autour de moi, ont l'ordre et la netteté du réel. Tandis que j'écris, Jean, près du poêle, repasse son cours de "résistance des matériaux" d'un air de sage composition tout-à-fait comique... Je ne rêve pas... Quel bonheur!

Donc, la nuit du 23 au 24 décembre, Jean rentra se coucher fort tard. (Quelque histoire de cotillon serait la cause de cette rentrée tardive que je ne serais pas autrement surprise.) Je ne dormais pas; je l'entendis tousser, tousser terriblement, presque sans discontinuer.

— Le misérable enfant aura encore pris froid! pensai-je.

Je me levai, je passai une robe de chambre et j'allai écouter sur le palier. Il ne toussait plus, mais il me sembla qu'il geignait, qu'il respirait avec effort, comme s'il souffrait. Ma foi! j'étais trop inquiète: j'envoyai promener les convenances, je frappai. Il ne répondit pas. J'ouvris la porte, qu'il ne ferme jamais à clef; je m'approchai de son lit. Sa figure, sur l'oreiller, était rouge de fièvre. Sitôt qu'il me vit, il geignit plus fort:

— Ah! mademoiselle Hortense, c'est fini, je suis mort, tenez!... J'ai pris une congestion. Je ne peux plus respirer. J'étouffe... Ils m'ont tué, avec leur Paris de malheur!... Comme c'est triste de mourir si jeune, loin de son pays!... Ah! pauvre!... j'étouffe!... Allez me chercher un docteur, ma bonne demoiselle Hortense!

Tandis qu'il s'apitoyait sur lui-même, je comptais ses pulsations, j'examinais ses yeux et je me convainquais que mon Jean Ducasse n'avait qu'un fort accès de fièvre, conséquence d'une grippe soignée à la diable. Je suis assez bonne garde-malade; je n'envoyai pas chercher le médecin, j'administrerai moi-même l'antipyrine et la quinine; je fis bien transpirer le patient, selon la méthode des bonnes femmes de chez nous; je m'efforçai de le calmer et de l'endormir. Il reposa un peu vers quatre heures du matin.

Toute la journée du lendemain, je ne le quittai pas. Pauvre petit Jean! Sa faconde était tombée. Il était vraiment un enfant malade, plaintif et nerveux. La fièvre le reprit vers la chute du jour, moins rude que la veille; puis, de nouveau, le sommeil lui rendit la quiétude.

Comme il dormait paisiblement, je m'assoupis à mon tour: depuis trente-six heures, je n'avais pas fermé l'œil...

Quand je m'éveillai, j'aperçus Jean Ducasse accoudé sur son traversin, qui me regardait. Il avait sa jolie figure gaie des jours ordinaires, à peine plus pâle. D'avoir dormi devant lui, je me sentis toute honteuse.

— Bé! me dit-il, vous en avez fait un somme, pauvre!... Moi, je vais me lever, vous savez?... J'en ai assez, d'être au lit!... Et puis, j'ai faim!

Je lui commandai de se tenir tranquille, ce qu'il fit, sur ma promesse de réveillonner à son chevet, avec lui; comme je quittais la chambre pour aller quérir les humbles éléments de ce réveillon, il me cria:

— N'oubliez pas les souliers dans votre cheminée, Hortense!

Il m'appelle Hortense tout court, depuis que je lui ai fait prendre de l'antipyrine.

Nous soupâmes gentiment, en tête à tête, lui couché, moi assise, une petite table entre nous deux; il était redevenu le Jean de tous les jours... Seulement... je ne sais pas si c'était l'effet de la fièvre, ou de l'antipyrine... ou du réveillon... mais il se permettait de me dire de telles folies, que je dus le menacer trois fois de m'en aller... Alors, il se mettait à tousser d'un ton lamentable, et moi, bête, je me rasseyais.

Je me retirai dans ma chambre vers une heure après minuit; et, n'étant plus inquiète, le sommeil me prit tout de suite.

Il faisait grand jour, quand on frappa à ma porte.

— Qui est là?

— Moi, Jean!

— Vous êtes souffrant?

— Hé! non!... Mais j'ai la lettre du notaire pour ma pauvre tante... Vous n'êtes pas prête, que je vous la montre?...

— Attendez... Je vais aller chez vous.

Cinq minutes plus tard, je trouvais mon petit voisin assis sur une chaise, dans sa chambre où l'on gelait, tenant la lettre du notaire; il avait l'air si peu traditionnel d'un héritier que je lui demandai aussitôt:

— La tante ne vous laisse rien, Jean?

— Hé! si! fit-il... Seulement, elle avait hypothéqué ses terres... Et puis, elle n'avait pas tout à fait quarante mille francs, tenez!... Elle le disait, oui, pourtant, qu'elle les avait!

Il me tendit la lettre. On lui demandait s'il acceptait la succession évaluée, après remboursement des obligations et acquittement des frais, à deux ou trois mille francs. Cette réduction d'actif ne me surprit pas autant que la réalité de l'héritage et de la tante elle-même. Je dis à Jean, qui méditait:

— Eh bien! Jean... mais... trois mille francs, c'est quelque chose... Vous allez accepter?

— Sûrement, que j'accepte! fit-il... Mais voilà mon voyage dans l'eau!... J'aurais voulu me payer deux ans de grande vie dans les endroits chics:

Monte-Carlo... Aix-les-Bains... Ostende... avant de me marier!... Que voulez-vous?... nous nous marierons tout de suite, voilà tout!

— Vous dites?...

— Je dis que j'en ai assez de cette vie que je mène, et où je risque ma santé!... J'aime bien mieux faire la fin d'abord... C'est dit, Hortense, nous nous marions!

Je me sentis toute pâle, et tout tourna autour de mes yeux.

— Il ne faut pas... murmurai-je... il ne faut pas rire de ces choses-là, Jean!

Mais il m'avait pris les mains:

— Rire?... Je ne ris pas du tout, Hortense!... Vous êtes bien la meilleure femme que je connaisse, "bou Diou!"... et vous me plaisez!...

— Jean...

— Et vous m'avez si bien soigné! Avec vous, je suis bien tranquille. Je vivrai en ménage comme un canard qu'on gave. Allons, soyez gentille: ne dites pas non!

— Mais c'est de la folie!... J'ai quatre ans de plus que vous!

— Trois et demi, d'abord... Et vous paraîsez vingt-et-un ans tout juste!... Et puis, dans le pays, je connais des quantités de ménages où la femme est plus vieille que le mari... Il y a un nommé Piot... non, pas celui-là... un nommé Rouillès, qui a dix ans de moins que sa femme. Et un nommé Corbal a vingt-cinq ans de moins. Un nommé Lagatère...

Il n'arrêtait plus; je dus l'interrompre:

— Ce serait mal de ma part d'accepter! Je suis pauvre. Vous, à votre sortie de l'Ecole, vous ferez un beau mariage. Non, décidément, je ne veux pas!

— Eh bien! alors, répliqua Jean, c'est dit: si vous me laissez, je vais retomber malade, par votre faute, tenez!

Et il se remit à tousser, à fendre l'âme.

Ma foi! j'ai fini par dire oui. C'est entendu, je suis une vieille folle. On ne me morigénera pas plus que je ne le fais moi-même. Ce gamin me trompera, me fera cent misères... Qui sait?... S'il m'aime, pourtant!... Moi,

je l'aimerais tant; et sans oser me l'avouer, je l'aimais tant, déjà! Risquer les joies de ma vie actuelle, ce n'est pas risquer grand'chose. Je veux un peu d'amour, un peu de bonheur, comme les autres femmes! Il y en a tant, dans ma condition, qui tournent mal; avec l'aide du maire, c'est ma façon de mal tourner, voilà tout!

...Jean lève le nez de dessus son gros cahier.

— Si j'avais mis mes souliers dans la cheminée, dit-il d'un ton demi-gogue-

nard, demi-chagrin, peut-être bien que, ce matin, j'y aurais trouvé les quarante mille de la tante?

— Bien sûr!... Le petit Jésus a châtié votre incrédulité!

— Hé! bé!... et vous?... Qu'y avez vous trouvé dans les vôtres, que vous aviez mis?

Je me lève, je vais embrasser dans le cou mon grand gamin de futur et, avec son accent que je sais très bien imiter, je lui dis à l'oreille:

— J'y ai trouvé un mari, té!...



## MINERALOGY

EARS as pink as sea-shells,  
Eyes of sapphire blue,  
Lips as red as rubies,  
Brows of ebon hue.

Figure like a statue,  
Arms of ivory mold,  
Hair a mesh of copper  
With strands of gleaming gold.

Teeth, two rows of seed pearls,  
Alabaster throat,  
Cheeks of chiseled ivory,  
Laugh of silvery note.

Glance of diamond brilliance,  
Wit as sharp as steel,  
Words like liquid jewels  
Gem-like thoughts reveal.

Is it any wonder  
(Taking Ruby's part),  
That, last night, she gave me  
Just a marble heart?

NELLIE CRAVEY GILLMORE



## NOT WITHOUT RESOURCES

"BUT do you think you can support my daughter?"  
"Well, it isn't as if I were marrying an orphan, you know."

## THE USUAL EXPERIENCE

"WELL, old boy, you look very blue for Christmas Day."

"So would you, I reckon, if you'd gone through what I did last night."

"Have a big time?"

"Enormous! I was hopeless imbecile enough to consent weakly when Helen coaxed me to help them trim the Christmas tree at her Sunday school. I don't think that just because a girl's engaged to you she has any right to insist upon your next to committing suicide for her, do you?"

"Well, I don't know; that's not much to ask, in some cases. But did anything particular happen last night?"

"Nothing but what I might have expected. I fell off the step-ladder unnumbered times, but I don't believe anybody ever did or ever will see a church step-ladder that can do more than stand alone; and I pulled the tree over with me only once; and I didn't break any bones."

"How about the Commandments?"

"Not out loud, anyway; so I was pretty lucky in some ways. But say, did you ever stick things on a Christmas tree under the direction of half a dozen girls, each with an open and avowed opinion that hers is the best taste in the bunch?"

"No, I'm happy to be able to state."

"Well, you've passed a very uneventful life. They'd pass up a tissue-paper and cardboard angel or ballet girl, I couldn't tell which, whose costume made me blush, and then they'd stand back and shriek at the top of their voices conflicting and irreconcilable orders as to where to put it, till I got dizzy and fell off the step-ladder. Then they'd pitilessly boost me up again, with an aside or two plenty loud enough for me to hear about how helpful their last year's victim had been."

"What did you do?"

"Oh, I finally thought of the scheme of listening for Helen's voice in the uproar, and doing what she wanted. I thought I'd please her, anyhow; but the rest of them discovered my little game in no time; then they'd lie low, waiting for her to make a suggestion, and no sooner did she do so than that cheerful bunch would take it up and scream it in unison at the top of their voices with diabolical glee. Of course, that made her mad, and she kindly informed them that they were acting like a lot of babies, and told me that I was a perfect idiot. I owned up, but the girls became angry, and from my perch on the ladder I listened to the most gorgeous exchange of Christmas compliments I'll bet ever celebrated that happy season. It'd be in full blast yet, I reckon, if I hadn't tried to applaud, forgetting where I was, and reminding them I was there by falling off that blessed step-ladder the first move I made. I can never live to be old enough to cease regretting that moment's forgetfulness. Well, with the exception of my smashing a cluster of electric light bulbs, and sticking one leg of the ladder through a stained-glass window, carrying it out, the rest is just the same thing over again. Say, do you know of anything that will take the ache out of sore bones and cure bruises? I'd like to be able to get around without groaning at every step some time this week."

ALEX. RICKETTS.

# HARTWELL & DUFF

By Herbert D. Ward

**H**ARTWELL & DUFF, Brokers, were the wolves of the Street.

They not only devoured the flocks of lambs that strayed hopefully upon those green pastures, but they tore the vitals of bulls and bears who had operated on the Exchange since their initiation. The rise of Hartwell & Duff had been one of the phenomena of Wall Street, and had not yet ceased to cause comment. To explain this or to analyze it seemed almost an impossibility. A year ago the firm had opened a brokerage office on the tenth floor of one of those horrible precipices that flank lower Broadway, and at a bound, by reason of its daring operations, it had forged into the front rank of monetary notice.

That there was some mystery connected with this firm no one seemed to doubt. Its offices consisted of the inevitable counting-room, where the busy clerks looked like anxious animals behind grated windows; the close, stuffy room where eager customers watched the ticker and the alert boy shifting quotations upon the board; the private consulting-room of the manager, with its manifold telephonic communications, and beyond, the private office of the members of the firm themselves. This office had two exits, one into the main corridor, and one that opened on a back stairway, a sort of dark fire-escape that led to the first floor. The private office had one entrance; and before it, at a desk, sat John Moore, the confidential secretary of the firm. No one could enter the office, no one could have an audience with the firm, no one could see either

Mr. Hartwell or Mr. Duff except by the permission of the private secretary. The very exclusiveness that Hartwell & Duff imposed upon all their customers, upon all their employees and upon all their allies or opponents in the great game of the Street was not a small factor in enhancing the dread which this formidable combination inspired. Sinclair, the manager, who drew a salary of five thousand a year and one per cent. of the profits of the firm, dared not go beyond that sacred door marked "Private" without Moore's permission.

That John Moore was an extraordinary man no one, who saw him for the first time, could doubt. He was rather short, stockily built, always dressed in black, with a black necktie tied after the old-fashioned style of a Sunday-school teacher; his mustache, which barely covered his upper lip, looked as if it had been dyed gray, and the color was just beginning to fade. His black hair was always brushed close to his head, and no employee had ever seen a lock out of its appointed place. His countenance betrayed impenetrable solemnity, if that can be called betrayal, and his manners were as suave as glycerine. His voice was soft, distinct and generally languid. If you listened to it and did not know what he was saying you would think he was entreating you to lead a better life. No one had ever heard him utter a quick word or seen him commit a rash action. The single violet in the lapel of his coat never seemed faded. That was the man. When he gave orders in the name of Hartwell & Duff, even in the fiercest moments of battle, in

those squalls that sweep over the Street and lay strong men low, it was with a still, small voice that somehow seemed to pierce through the tornado and dominate the hurricane. Where he came from no one knew. All the office did know was that he had engaged every man of them, and, as the mouthpiece of the firm, they were accountable to him.

It is impossible to describe Mr. Hartwell or Mr. Duff, for during the year in which this firm had existed it was said that no one save their confidential secretary or possibly Sinclair, the manager, had seen them; and as these men were trained not to talk but only to manipulate, the personal characteristics and the personal appearance of the members of the firm must be for the present left out of account.

That this firm had extraordinary resources everyone admitted. For what millionaire or aggregation of captains of industry, for what trusts were they representatives? Time and time again the Street had turned upon them *en masse* expecting to rend them, only to find itself baffled by resources that seemed almost inexhaustible.

At the time of which we are the chance historian Hartwell & Duff had sowed the wind, and everyone predicted that they would reap the whirlwind.

"Excuse me, Mr. Moore"—the important office-boy approached the private secretary deferentially—"but there is a gentleman outside who says he must see Mr. Hartwell. What shall I tell him?"

"Who is he?" asked Moore, not looking up from his desk.

"It's Mr. Carrol, sir."

"Of Stone & Carrol?"

"Yes, sir. He says it's of the utmost importance."

Moore sighed, and nodded to the office-boy. A curious tightening of the lips, whether of exaltation or of pity, was the only betrayal of interest that his young-old face showed. From the other side of the railing Sinclair, the manager, turned for a moment from a group of excited men

that surrounded him, wondering if the confidential secretary were a man or a mask. Mr. Moore did not rise when Carrol came rushing up.

"I tell you," said Mr. Carrol, "I've got to see Hartwell immediately! You don't suppose," he burst forth, his bloodshot eyes glaring down at the unperturbed face, "that I'm going to allow myself to be gored like a dog in a pen! I've got to see him or—!" Carrol brought his fist down upon the top of the desk, but encountered oak as impenetrable as the countenance before him. He was only bruised, and therefore the more exasperated.

"Mr. Hartwell is at lunch," Moore said pleasantly.

"Then Duff—?"

"Mr. Duff is at his home on Long Island, sick with appendicitis. Can I do anything for you myself?"

Carrol was a tall, fine-looking man, the type of the clear-cut metropolitan *bon vivant*. He was perfectly groomed, and his scarfpin was of the latest fashion. One sees dozens of such brokers in the uptown restaurants at one o'clock at night. They make a million dollars a year as room-traders and on commission, and carry with them the insolent air of self-satisfied arrogance that would aggravate the poor country farmer, who had relied on the latest Wall Street news, to shoot them. Carrol's income was the fleece of lambs.

"No!" he stormed; "I don't deal with subordinates."

"I am sorry, Mr. Carrol," said Moore suavely; "Mr. Hartwell has empowered me to act in the matter until he comes back. Let me see"—looking over some papers rapidly—"I believe your firm is about sixty-five thousand shares short, is it not?"

"Damn it, I should think it was!"

"I have it from Mr. Hartwell's own lips," continued the private secretary quietly, "that he intends to have them all called in tomorrow. I am afraid there is no help for it. You are not the only firm that is in trouble."

"My God!" exclaimed Carrol, wiping

his brow and tipping his tall hat further back, "do you know what that means?"

"I suppose Mr. Hartwell does," replied the secretary, without looking up. If glances could have killed, Moore would have been blasted then and there. The speculator turned his back abruptly, passed through the gesticulating crowd which surrounded the manager, and rushed out.

Moore sighed, and his dark eyes tightened a little as he bent again calmly over his papers.

"Here's a gentleman," interrupted the office-boy, "who says he has a special appointment with Mr. Hartwell at two o'clock." The boy presented the card, at which Moore merely glanced.

"Show him in here," he said.

"I just met Mr. Hartwell at lunch," said the stranger, bustling up. "I don't suppose you know, but he is an old classmate of mine. He told me to come up and talk this L. & T. matter over. By gad, sir, I don't understand it at all! I got a straight tip"—his voice sank to a whisper—"and here I am landed with five thousand short. Hartwell says he will make it all right, though."

Moore looked at the card and then up at the caller.

"Mr. Plunkett, I presume?"

"Yes, that is my name."

"Let me see—what college was it that you graduated from?"

The man hesitated for the briefest moment, and then said:

"Princeton—Princeton, Seventy-nine. Of course you don't know anything about that. 'Fred,' said he—he always calls me Fred—we don't mean to squeeze you—don't you worry about that at all," said he—

"Are you sure," interrupted Moore casually, "that it is the same Hartwell?"

The man hesitated another instant, and then burst forth enthusiastically:

"As if I didn't know Frank Hartwell!"

"I thought so," said Moore, rising with a genial smile as he held out his

hand; "our Mr. Hartwell is James. Let me see"—he looked at his memorandum—"Plunkett—Plunkett— Oh, yes! you will receive a notice tomorrow. Good day!" He snapped his finger at the office-boy, who had been watching the interview with a sardonic grin, and before he knew it the member of the class of seventy-nine found himself escorted into the outer offices.

At this moment Sinclair, the manager, found himself backed up against the wall, surrounded by a crowd of angry men.

"I tell you, gentlemen," he said, "I have no voice in this matter! You will have to see Mr. Hartwell or Mr. Duff. I only execute their orders. Mr. Moore and I are not responsible; but I assure you that I will do the best I can."

That this was not an extraordinary scene was instanced by the fact that the clerks kept on their calculations with the same serenity as if the Street were not threatened with the greatest convulsion since Black Friday.

Sinclair walked within the gate.

"Look here, Mr. Moore," he said, "I can't do anything with these men; they are perfectly wild."

"Well, send them in," said Moore; "I'll run in and see if Mr. Hartwell has returned. Tell them that I will do all that I can for them. I suppose it is only the fortune of war, though."

Now it is a fact that these men were, or represented, some of the richest plungers on the Street. They were not of the diffident class. They were used to excitement; they had fomented many a riot on the Exchange, and they had caused the ruin of many men without the quiver of an eyelash. Yet as they were ushered within that slender paling, in front of that innocent and harmless-looking desk, each one of them felt a powerful restraint which he could not analyze, and which calmed him for the instant. If the personality of that imperturbed private secretary, who could not possibly draw more than a few thousand a year in salary, could have such an

ominous effect upon them, what would Mr. Hartwell's presence itself accomplish, or even that of the invalid, Mr. Duff? Neither of these gentlemen had they personally met.

For ten minutes they waited, looking at one another without speaking a word. Voices were heard from within, and one could distinguish the tones of the private secretary raised as if in entreaty. The men looked at the clock anxiously. They listened to the soprano voice of the lad who was tabulating quotations rapidly.

"L. & T.," he cried, "one hundred forty-four—and a quarter—and a half—five-eighths—one hundred and forty-five."

The men looked at one another like rats caged. The door opened—there was a screen, and no one could see within.

"Will you come out yourself, Mr. Hartwell?" asked the private secretary. "You will be in, then, tomorrow morning? All right. Good afternoon, sir!"

"I am sorry, gentlemen," continued Mr. Moore, as he closed the door quickly; "Mr. Hartwell is just called away on important business—to a meeting of a board of directors."

"I say! Hartwell!" cried one.

"I hope you do not doubt me, gentlemen," said Mr. Moore, with great dignity; "I appreciate your position." He opened the door wide and flung the screen aside. The room was empty.

"But Duff?" cried one.

"Mr. Duff is sick in bed with appendicitis," explained the private secretary mournfully; "Mr. Hartwell has been in full charge of these operations for the last two weeks."

The private secretary stood easily before his desk, with the men flanking the rail in front of him.

"I cannot move him at all," said Moore quietly; "as I told our Mr. Sinclair, it is the fortune of war, and I am afraid you'll have to accept it."

The strident voice of the boy dominated the secretary's quiet tones:

"L. & T. one hundred forty-six and a half."

The men took out their watches. Every leap of that stock spelt greater ruin and penury for them. Where would it end? And there were only thirty-five minutes more to stem that fatal tide before the gavel of the presiding officer fell.

"But my God!" cried one.

"This is simply hell!" gasped another.

The door of the outer office opened with a bang, and another broker plunged in, bringing the cold air of the street with him.

"Hasn't Mr. Hartwell returned yet?" cried an agonized voice.

"I am sorry," answered the private secretary, tightening his lips again for the second time, as he glanced up. "I am sorry," he proceeded, with great courtesy, "that Mr. Hartwell is gone for the day."

The men looked at one another with consternation.

"L. & T. one hundred and forty-seven!" piped the shrill voice of fate from the adjoining room.

Silently the men turned, and then, as if they were driven by the lash, they broke and plunged from the room.

"L. & T. one hundred forty-seven and a half—five-eighths—"

The private secretary and the manager were left alone. So still was the room that the sound of the typewriters seemed to split the air. The two men looked at each other. Sinclair's hands were trembling, and he controlled his excitement with difficulty. But John Moore smiled at him inscrutably. He had the air of listening, as if he could hear the frenzied shrieks of dozens of brokers dashing themselves to death before the board on which was L. & T. inscribed.

"Mr. Hartwell," he said leisurely, "has given orders that the stock shall be called in tomorrow."

"Very well, sir," answered Mr. Sinclair nervously; "I would not be in Mr. Hartwell's shoes for a million tomorrow!"

"Nor I either," answered Moore drily as he sank into a seat—"if I could help myself."

For the first time in its career the firm of Hartwell & Duff were not speculating, but buying for investment. The Louisiana and Tennessee railroad had become for them a necessary outlet to the seaboard, and for three months they had been quietly picking up its stock in London, in Chicago, in Boston, as well as in Wall Street. Until very recently no one had suspected their part in the quiet sequestration of this important stock. When they needed only a few shares to complete their control they threw off the mask, and the bears, their old enemies, immediately considered them an easy object of attack. Nothing pleased Hartwell & Duff better. They bought all that was sold, even while the stock was tremendously depressed by the seemingly concerted movement of the whole Street. Then all at once the bears woke up. They realized that they had sold what they did not possess, and they began to shiver with apprehension. When our firm had accumulated one hundred thousand more shares than they knew existed in circulation, they quietly called the stock in. Only those who have millions behind them can afford the hazard of such a gigantic transaction.

At the time of which we write the Stock Exchange was a scene of indescribable madness. L. & T. must be purchased at any price, and in order to do this gilt-edged stocks were poured forth like water. Many of the stanchest firms on the Street had been caught "short," and, as the clock struck three, L. & T. had already leaped to two hundred and fifty, and there appeared to be no limit in sight for what a man must pay for a single legitimate share. The squeeze promised to rival, if not surpass, that of the famous Northern Pacific, and ruin stared many a millionaire in the face.

On the following momentous day when the messenger-boys had been sent to call in L. & T. for payment, John Moore seemed the only one in the office who was unconcerned. Sin-

clair, the manager, as well as everyone in the office, kept looking at him nervously, starting every time he knocked at and disappeared within the private office of the firm. The noon hour struck, and there was a lull in the ticker. At this period of quiet an avalanche of men stormed in. They rushed past Sinclair, who endeavored to stop them; and the crowd only came to an unwilling halt before the low railing that separated them from the desk of the private secretary. These were wild men—men whose bloodshot eyes revealed the ruin that only a few minutes could postpone. They were headed by Carrol, whose purple face betrayed apoplectic apprehension.

John Moore arose. He got up quietly; the only change in his expression was that of courteous attention. The violet in his buttonhole was fresh, and he looked like a man who was waiting congratulations on a very happy engagement.

"Look here, young man!" stormed Mr. Carrol, "we've got to see Mr. Hartwell and Mr. Duff immediately, and we will not be put off!"

"I will transmit any message you may wish to give," said John Moore gently.

"But we've come to—I say we give up—we capitulate—we make any compromise that will—that will give us our skin! Tell Mr. Hartwell to come out."

Moore took a single step which brought him before the door of the private office.

"Mr. Hartwell has just left town," he said half apologetically.

"Do you mean," cried Carrol, doing his best to control his excitement, "that Mr. Hartwell will leave the office on a day like this?"

"He wanted to stay," explained Moore, "but this is an errand of mercy. His partner, Mr. Duff, has an operation for appendicitis."

"Errand of mercy!" blazed Carrol as he looked around him. Every man in that stormy group knew what he wanted to say, but they dared not open their lips.

John Moore threw his head up and faced the anger of those before him with courteous coldness.

"Gentlemen," he said, "Mr. Hartwell has placed the management of this unfortunate matter in my hands today. It seems to me that this is the fortune of war. You would have eagerly devoured us if you could; indeed, you did all you could to do so. You have never had any mercy toward us in the past, and I doubt if you have ever had pity on any poor lamb who has strayed upon your pastures. Now when your turn has come to be tossed, why don't you take it like men, not come around here howling for the mercy you would never have shown us? You meant to ruin Hartwell & Duff. I don't see how we can help you any."

The men before him looked at one another in consternation. The private secretary had not raised his voice as he uttered this scathing arraignment, but they knew that he had spoken the truth. It was simply one life against another. It was simply one fortune against another. It was one ruin against another. They had played the game and they had lost. Theirs was the punishment, and they were squealing like schoolboys.

"What will you compromise for?" demanded Carrol desperately.

"What would you suggest?" asked Moore blandly. "The stock will be cheap at a thousand tomorrow noon."

The men again looked at one another in greater desperation than before. Again they knew that the secretary had spoken the truth. To compromise on two hundred and fifty today when he could get a thousand tomorrow did not seem good business even to those desperate men.

John Moore stood awaiting an answer that could not come. Baffled, cowed, silent, his visitors turned away. The bell of the church at the head of the street tolled one.

"L. & T.," the strident voice of the marker in the next room cried, "two hundred and eighty-seven—three hundred—"

The men listened, paled and fled.

At three o'clock in the afternoon the Stock Exchange is closed. For a few minutes a few transactions are made on the curb after this daily event. But the business of the banking-house or the stockbroker's firm is generally continued until six, and often far into the night, until all the accounts are balanced.

It was a little after five that same afternoon when John Moore prepared to leave. Sinclair, the manager, had to stay on. The main front entrance of the office was locked as usual after business hours, and only the side entrance was open. As Moore came into the front office to give to the manager the firm's last instructions for the night there was a tap upon the front door, and, not knowing what the seething day might bring, he opened the door himself.

Instead of a messenger-boy, a young lady stepped in. When the office-boy saw her, with the prerogative of his position, he made a leap to her side in order to inquire what her business was. So preoccupied was Moore with his conversation that he did not even look at the lady's face; he only heard the crackle of her skirts, and turned away to finish what he was saying. He spoke in a tone which the lady could not help overhearing.

"L. & T.," he continued, "closed at three hundred and forty-five. It will open tomorrow at five hundred. I am going to meet Mr. Hartwell, and shall go down tonight to Long Island to see Mr. Duff. They will decide the case, and we shall know tomorrow how to treat the 'shorts.' I shall advise Mr. Hartwell not to come to the office tomorrow—he isn't well, and is very nervous."

In the absence of the riot of the ticker the office seemed preternaturally quiet. To the young lady who stood waiting, watching and listening the busy silence seemed like the crouching of a tiger before its leap. She was used to brokers' offices, but as she stood there her limbs trembled violently, and terror overcame her. Be-

fore the office-boy dared interrupt his principals with the lady's errand the side door opened and a messenger pushed in. Sinclair clutched the yellow envelope and tore it open nervously. The two men paid no attention to the lady.

"It's from Albany," he said laconically, as he handed the paper over to Moore.

"That settles the last block of four thousand," said Moore quietly. "I don't believe there's another share to be bought in North America. We've got the last there is. It will be up to a thousand by twelve."

Preoccupied by this final victory, he listened to the office-boy's explanation.

"Yes," he said. "Show the lady into the private office. I'll be right in."

With a feeling of loathing, Miss Christine Carrol looked about her. She did not sit down. She paced the soft carpet restlessly. She noted the two shut desks, each one of which had the name of a member of the firm printed outside. She noted the heavy screen before the door—bespeaking a Machiavellian privacy; she noted the stenographer's desk and all the appurtenances of business solidity. Her brown eyes darkened, and she summoned all her dignity for the interview with the subordinate of the firm.

John Moore had not even looked at her card when he went in. Woman had never touched him. A woman's weakness, her tears, her pleading, could have no effect upon his cold nature. He had never been enchanted by that nameless charm which radiates from an exquisite feminine personality. He had been too busy during his life, too preoccupied, as he was now.

When he entered he shut the door quietly. The distant rumbling of the Street accentuated the peace of that room. But the girl knew that his pseudo-quiet masked the bitterest warfare the Street had ever known.

"Sir," began the young lady coldly, "you know who I am and why I am here."

"Upon my word I do not," said Moore a little abruptly. He had not yet looked the girl straight in the face. "Excuse me," he said. He glanced at the card and then at her. "I beg your pardon!"

For the first time in his life John Moore almost lost his self-possession. Instinctively he knew that there stood before him the daughter of old Carrol, at this moment the firm's bitterest enemy, and he also knew, as he looked into her face, that the hatred of the father had descended with interest into the heart of the daughter.

"I," stammered John Moore, "I—am—a—the confidential secretary of Hartwell & Duff, and will do all I can to please you."

"I have come to see Mr. Hartwell." Miss Carrol spoke with freezing hauteur. "I do not like to say what I have to to his subordinate."

She stood before him, superior, contemptuous, vibrant with hatred, and with the power of her own beauty. She was dressed in a close-fitting tailored gown of gray cloth, with a bunch of violets at her corsage. From under the black hat her brown hair waved rebelliously. Her lips were large and generous, and the contours of her face were proud and womanly. She was magnificent in her anger.

"Don't blame me," said John aloud, with an appealing gesture of his right hand. "Mr. Hartwell is not here, and I only carry out their orders."

"But do you know," flashed the girl, "that you—I mean Mr. Hartwell—have ruined papa? Do you think," she went on, pacing the room in her excitement, "do you think that I care about it for my sake or for his?"

"No, I don't think so," said John Moore, looking at her with the naive admiration which he had never felt before for any woman.

"Do you think," continued the girl, stopping before him and eying him with scorn, "that I would come here and ask your Mr. Hartwell or your Mr. Duff to save us from ruin? I despise them too much."

"No," said John lamely, "I don't think you would."

He shifted his weight to the other foot, and began to feel like a whipped schoolboy.

"Do you suppose," continued the girl, her voice becoming colder and more vibrant, "that papa or I care whether we are rich or poor?"

"I should hope not!" John ejaculated idiotically.

"I've come here for my mother's sake." The girl's voice changed as she said this. Her eyes filled with tears and her pride battled royally with her emotion. "Mama is sick at home. She is a nervous invalid, and to turn her out of her house and start life all over again would kill her. I tell you," blazed the girl again, "I wouldn't care a bit—I'd like the excitement of it, and I don't think papa would really care. I wouldn't beg for us, but"—and she choked down a sob—"I do beg for her."

John Moore was staring at the girl. The tragedies of the Street had never come to him in this way. Ruin was an abstract matter, and suicide was a distant solution. Sometimes it was the battle of kids. Sometimes it was the battle of wolves. Sometimes it was the battle of giants. But the groans of the dying and the miseries of the defeated had never before been brought to his ears. He was too far away up there in that upper story, where the telephone tells no tale of starvation and the ticker no stories of forced sales.

"I assure you, Miss Carrol," began John Moore, trying to control his new emotion, "that I will do all I can for you. It's been a fair fight, and your father has lost. We are not altogether heartless, I hope."

The girl looked at him, her face relaxing a little, as if she were trying to believe in the secretary's sincerity. Then her old antagonism returned.

"Hartwell! Heartless!" she ejaculated.

John Moore flushed under this sarcasm, and his usually impassive face began to have a troubled look. He

had never before been at a distinct disadvantage in his relations with the firm, and he was very uncomfortable.

"I will see the firm this evening," he said, "and will lay your case before them to the best of my power."

"Oh!" cried Christine Carrol, clinching her hands, "if I could only see this Hartwell once! or your Mr. Duff. I'd—I'd show them what I felt."

John Moore looked at her quizzically, and then said, with great gentleness, approaching her a step:

"I wish you would trust me in this matter. Don't you think you can?"

"Look here, Mr.—" She turned upon him quickly.

"Moore," he interpolated.

"Well, Mr. Moore," she went on, a little more composedly, "I suppose you can answer me one question honestly, can't you?"

"I'll try to," John Moore replied meekly.

"Couldn't your firm save papa if they wanted to? I mean," she went on nervously, "do it on the quiet so that the rest of those who are caught short wouldn't know anything about it. You know what I mean."

John Moore looked at the girl's beautiful and troubled face. A great desire arose in his heart to please her above all persons in the world. He had never had that feeling before, and it disturbed a nature cast in the relentless business mold.

"Yes," he admitted, "it would be a little unusual, but I suppose they could."

"Then, Mr. Moore, if they can, won't you make them?"

She looked at him with a rare smile that transformed her unapproachable hauteur into sweet dependence.

"I will let you know tomorrow morning," said Moore decisively. "May I call upon you at your house?"

"Not unless you succeed."

The girl withdrew into herself again and looked at him as a fencer might.

"Then I will come surely," he said.

She broke into a charming smile of hope.

"But papa must never know that I have been here," she said. "I have sacrificed my pride. He never would have allowed me to do it."

As John Moore stepped from his hansom at half-past nine o'clock the next morning his face wore an expression of diffident anxiety. By reason of his position he was a man used to luxury, and he did not even lift an eye toward all the garish evidences of wealth that greeted him as he entered. He sent up his name to Miss Carrol, and sat down in the reception-room, holding his hat with an embarrassed air.

As soon as that young lady entered he arose to meet her, and instinctively held out his hand as if he had the right of friendship.

"What is the matter?" he cried, still holding her hand, as he noticed the girl's troubled pallor. "Has anything happened?"

"I don't know, I cannot tell." Miss Carrol was evidently summoning all her strength to repress her emotion. "My father did not come home last night, and mama has heard something and is perfectly wild. Tell me"—looking up at him with feverish eyes—"have you seen Mr. Hartwell? Did you persuade him?"

"Mr. Hartwell," Moore began, "has looked into the matter and has decided to do what I consider a very generous thing for him. He's a cold-hearted man, and he isn't apt to give his pity outlet, if he has any. Mr. Duff is too sick to interfere, and possibly he may not survive, so he is thrown entirely out of account."

Moore stopped speaking, for, in the relaxation of her troubled heart, tears began to flow unrestrained from the eyes of the girl beside him.

"Oh, Mr. Moore," she cried, "forgive me—I can't help it. I don't remember when I ever did it before, but you have been so good, so good to me."

John Moore, too, looked greatly moved. He felt a choking sensation in his throat, and turned his face away, but quickly regained himself.

"Well, it's all right now, anyway,"

he said cheerfully. "I didn't do anything; it was all Mr. Hartwell. He's going to let your father off at one hundred and fifty. This will mean only a small loss to him. I shouldn't wonder if the stock opened at a thousand this morning."

Moore had recovered his poise, and looked at the girl gravely.

"You see, Miss Carrol, I wasn't allowed to come here unless I brought you good news. Somehow or other I *had* to come. Do you understand? It wasn't altruism on my part, the way it was with Hartwell; it was pure selfishness."

John Moore arose and glanced at the clock upon the mantelpiece; it was fifteen minutes slow. Miss Carrol followed him to the door. Expression after expression swept over her beautiful, mobile face; she had done what no other power on the Street could have accomplished. She had touched the relentless hearts of Hartwell & Duff. She had saved her father from ruin, her mother from poverty, and all through the chivalrous instrument who stood before her. She had cast her pride to the winds, and her heart gloried in the fact. She could not speak. She dared not. Would he misinterpret her gratitude? He had held the fate of her family in the palm of his hand. She owed him everything, possibly the life of her father, the reason of her mother.

"May I come and see you again, Miss Carrol?"

John Moore looked up at her timidly, almost like a boy; but he could not veil his emotion.

The girl's eyes drooped before his.

"Yes," she said, in a low tone, "I owe you everything—of course you may."

"Not *that*," urged Moore. "I've already forgotten it. I never want it mentioned again. I ask it, not for what I've done, but for myself."

The color surged to Miss Carrol's cheeks.

"Just as you will," she said, with a ravishing smile. "I shall be glad to see you for your own sake."

They stood together for a minute or so, both hesitating, both embarrassed. Then the woman of the world spoke, with a nervous laugh.

"Forgive me," she began, "what I said about your Mr. Hartwell yesterday. I shall never think of him as heartless again. I couldn't do that now; and tell him from me," she continued seriously, "that he can never ask me anything that I wouldn't do for him."

"You mean that?" asked John abruptly.

"Mean it? Of course I do. He has given me everything—it is the least I could do in return."

"You wouldn't carry your gratitude so far as to marry him?" Moore asked, with a quick look.

"I hadn't thought of that," Miss Carrol replied gravely. "I'm so happy I don't know what I wouldn't do."

"Mr. Hartwell is not married," said John, "and I cannot vouch for the consequences if he sees you."

For a moment the girl hesitated, and then looked up at her guest with the air of a consecrated martyr.

"I meant just as much and as little as I said," she replied steadily, though startled.

"Very well," said John; "I will remember."

"And papa?" asked Miss Carrol.

"Mr. Hartwell has made an appointment with your father at eleven this morning, provided that Mr. Duff is better. At any rate, I will be there, and will have a confidential talk with him."

Miss Carrol could not speak. She held out her hand, which Moore took, and did not at once release.

"Good-bye," he said; "you will see me again soon."

The portières closed behind him. He did not know that the lady of his heart stood behind the lace curtains watching him drive away.

Beneath the green terrace the Hudson looked like a broad blue ribbon. Beyond the tennis court the trees

made an etched frame for the picture. The summer had already beguiled the rich out of the city.

Two young people sat upon the cool grass in the shade talking earnestly. The man twirled his racquet. He had a habit of looking up when she spoke, and of looking down when he spoke. One could not tell whether he were happy or ill at ease. But the lady, sitting more upright, seemed to have the advantage of self-possession as well as of position.

"Papa says," began Christine Carrol in a questioning way, "that they haven't heard much lately from your firm. I think he seemed a little anxious, not knowing which way the cat would jump."

"Well," John Moore replied frankly, "there hasn't been much doing since Mr. Duff died and Mr. Hartwell went to Europe. You see, Mr. Hartwell took the bereavement very deeply. It will take some time to restore his nerve."

"I think they are real mean"—Christine jabbed her racquet into the ground—"not to make you a member of the firm. Papa says——"

"Oh! I couldn't aspire to anything like that, Miss Carrol." John looked down sadly. "I'm only a poor man without any backing. If it had not been for my father they wouldn't have taken me in at all. You see, he was a miner in Cripple Creek when he died."

"I think it's splendid to be poor!" The young lady spoke with the deep conviction of one who had always had two maids and a footman to wait upon her.

"Do you really mean that?" John asked eagerly.

"When papa was married he was only a clerk——"

"Well, a clerk is better than a private secretary!"

"But—I thought," and the girl cast upon him a keen look, "that you managed all the business of the firm now. Papa says——"

"I have a cablegram from Mr. Hartwell every day," John answered quietly.

For a few minutes the two young people sat silent and constrained. Then their eyes, compelled, met steadily, and each read in the other's face the message that is easily spoken in the month of June.

"Ah, Miss Carrol!" John Moore began, this time looking up bravely into her waiting eyes, "do you know I'm not going to waste another minute? It's either wreck or rescue. For three months I've been mad to tell you that I love you and can't live without you. Why, the first time I saw you I loved you. You know I'm poor and tied down, but I've got a heart just as if I were rich—perhaps more so. Won't you give me a little hope?"

A smile, roguish, evanescent, swept over the girl's beautiful face.

"Haven't you forgotten Mr. Hartwell?" she asked. "You know I half promised myself to him. I hope you didn't tell him, did you?"

"Do you want to know?" asked Moore.

The girl nodded.

"Well, if you insist upon it"—John looked her straight in the eyes—"I did. And he said——"

"What *did* he say?" gasped Christine.

"He said: 'Confound the girl! Does she suppose that I can marry every woman I help?'"

Miss Carrol flushed as if she had received a blow in the face.

"The insolent! I hope you——"

"Well, I should think I did!" John returned with spirit. "I told him he was no gentleman, and offered my resignation then and there."

"He didn't take it, did he?" Christine paled at the thought.

"No." John waved his hand as if he were waving the senior member of his firm out of existence. "He's rather a decent fellow although he is insolent, as you say. He said he wouldn't stand in the way of my advancement for the world."

"I hope he'll never come back to this country," flashed Christine. "I just hate him!"

"If you hate him," pleaded Moore

passionately, "won't you love me—just a little?"

The girl's eyes fell before the mastery of his. A gust of wind stirred the tree above them. A green leaf floated down, and even as it fell the girl's head drooped and drooped, until, if the young man had not had a shoulder, it must have fallen on the grass beside the leaf. John caught her.

"Christine!" he cried in ecstasy.

"John, dear John!" she sobbed, "I don't care how poor you are, I've always loved you. I couldn't help it."

With the innocent naïveté of a woman for the first time won, she put up her lips to be kissed.

"Hello, young people!" A raucous voice sounded behind them. "What are you up to?"

At the sound of the paternal interruption, man-like, John started away, but woman-like, Christine looked up and neither blushed, nor paled, nor fluttered. Her hand was still on her lover's shoulder, and she looked straight up into her father's face.

"You've come just in time, papa," she said sweetly. "Mr. Moore has asked me to be his wife."

"I thought it was about time," said Mr. Carrol drily.

He sat down on the grass beside the young lovers and looked them over with quizzical tenderness.

"I suppose now," he said with assumed gruffness, "that we'll have to take you into the firm of Stone & Carrol. We need a new manager. Have you any prospects, young man, besides your present position—or what I suggest?"

"Everything I've got is invested in Hartwell & Duff," John answered manfully.

"That's all right, papa," began Christine, patting her lover's hand. "John's poor and I love him, and we are going to begin life just as you and mama did. Aren't we, John?"

"I don't quite like that firm of yours," Mr. Carrol persisted. "Not that it has no financial standing. None is rated higher on the Street. It does millions a year. But there's

some mystery about it. If you marry my daughter I shall insist upon your getting out. What is your exact salary?"

Christine looked at her lover and nodded encouragingly. She was in that beatific state when she did not care how infinitesimal his salary was. But John looked embarrassed. He hesitated, and moistened his lips, and the color swept from his face.

"Well?" asked the old man impatiently.

"You see," began John slowly, "Sinclair has a salary, and all the rest of them in the office have salaries. I am the only one who has no regular weekly stipend."

"Are you there on percentage, then? That's strange!" Mr. Carrol looked at his future son-in-law suspiciously.

"It isn't exactly a percentage," John explained haltingly. "I—I get all I can."

"You don't mean to say that you're dependent on the—whim of Hartwell & Duff? On their bounty?"

"Mr. Duff is dead."

Christine cast down her eyes.

"And," proceeded Moore, "Hartwell has a nervous shock, from which he may never recover. I received a cable from him this morning." While John said this he was digging his racquet into the earth.

"Look here, Mr. Moore"—the elder man spoke grimly—"you profess to love my daughter, and my daughter thinks she loves you. On your word of honor as a gentleman, Mr. Moore, did you receive a cable from Mr. Hartwell this morning?"

Mr. Carrol's daughter dropped her lover's hand, and looked from one to the other in a frightened way. John looked down. It seemed a long time before he raised his eyes with a grave smile to Mr. Carrol's, and answered:

"No, I did not."

"Then, sir," and the elder man's face darkened, "you lied to me!"

John flushed again.

"I suppose, in a way, I did. I can explain."

"I think you had better, sir," re-

plied Mr. Carrol sternly, "before you marry my daughter."

"Why, the fact of it is simply, if you must know"—the young man spoke as nonchalantly as he could—"there isn't any Hartwell and there wasn't any Duff, although he did die."

"You may continue your explanations." Mr. Carrol spoke coldly.

"There never were any." Moore smiled blandly. "They are only sign-boards—that's all."

"I see," Mr. Carrol nodded. "Hartwell & Duff were men of straw. I insist upon knowing who's behind them."

This time John Moore turned his face from the father to the daughter, and made answer to the startled question in her eyes.

"I am," he said.

"You?" Carrol started to his feet.

"You?" Christine cried.

"Yes," answered John demurely; "I am Hartwell & Duff, and always have been."

"Then," blazed Carrol, "you are the man who would have ruined me!"

"Yes," admitted John, "I would, and I feel a little ashamed of it now."

"Then," exclaimed Christine, "you are the man who saved him!"

"How could I help it?"

"Then"—and this time Mr. Carrol spoke with great respect—"then you are one of the richest men in New York and one of the shrewdest on the Street."

"I suppose I am what I am," admitted John. "All I know is that I love your daughter."

But Christine recoiled from the man to whom she had just plighted her troth.

"Then you are not poor, and we cannot begin as papa did? And you have played with me, and have not told me the truth, and you've won me under false pretenses, sir!"

But Mr. Carrol had turned his back upon the pair and had walked away. His ambition for his daughter was more than satisfied. While he admired Moore he preferred to receive

him into the family as he was, rather than as he might have been.

"Christine," said John, "I love you with all my soul, and I wanted you to love me just as I am. I wanted to win you. I didn't want anything else to win you. Don't you see? Now will you forgive me, girl?"

Christine looked away over the deep-flowing blue ribbon beyond the trees. Her ideals of things were suddenly shattered, but her ideal of him refused

to break beneath the blow which he had dealt upon it.

"I don't see how you can get out of it, dear," said John softly. "You know you said you might marry Mr. Hartwell if he asked you, and he is asking you now. He isn't heartless. He is a very loving, tender man."

With a quick movement she dashed the tears from her eyes and turned to him, and this time their lips met and clung without interruption.



## FAINT HEART

'T WAS Christmas Eve; Drusilla sat  
Before the open fire dozing.  
The gathered shadows tokened that  
The day was closing.

Reflected by the ruddy glow,  
Above her where she slumbered gently,  
There hung a sprig of mistletoe  
Quite innocently.

He gazed at her a moment where  
She slept, a picture most beguiling.  
"It wouldn't be exactly fair,"  
He murmured, smiling.

The green leaves hung so close above,  
He wondered at his hesitation,  
Yet feared to take advantage of  
The situation.

But now, ah, cruel hand of Fate,  
Drusilla's eyes are fast unveiling.  
Ah, what had made him hesitate  
With courage failing?

He feared lest she his thoughts had read,  
And held his breath. "How irritating!  
I placed it there myself," she said.  
"What keeps you waiting?"

REYNALD SMITH PICKERING.



WHEN a man makes a mistake in his first marriage the victim is his second wife.

## NATURE-LONGING

TO be alone with Nature, you and I  
 Together in some undiscovered place,  
 Where we may look the Silence in the face,  
 And learn of the wise winds that wander by  
 The secret of their healing. Oh, to lie  
 For hours on Time's broad bosom, with blue space  
 Laid on us like a garment! To embrace  
 The motherly trees that never will deny  
 Sustenance to their children! Let us find  
 The way that beckons where the days are green,  
 The nights a hue our eyes have never seen,  
 And leaving the world-dissonance behind,  
 Seek the earth-harmony. So our dust-blind  
 Spirits shall learn what their own longings mean.

ELSA BARKER.



## WHEN IT WOULD BE NEEDED

HEWITT—How did the prisoner take his sentence?  
 JEWETT—All right; he said he would get out at the same time his twenty-year endowment insurance policy matured.



## IT MUST HAVE BEEN

BAGGE—That man has misrepresented me.  
 CANNING—Why, has he said something to your credit?



THE man who calls himself the victim of circumstances is often to blame for the circumstances.

# A QUESTION OF FITNESS

By Lilian Tweed

I WISH to goodness Nellie had not started me on such a worrying train of thought! I wish it all the more devoutly, because today happens to be Sunday, tomorrow will be Christmas Day, and the next day bank holiday; therefore three days must elapse before I can take any steps to put the matter right which is troubling me.

This afternoon, when we had finished the usual stupefying midday Sabbath meal—somehow a Sunday without a joint of roast beef would almost seem sacrilegious—we began talking about Christian Science. I say we began talking about it, but by the time Nellie had ended it didn't sound like anything at all Christian. Indeed, the principles she propounded reminded me more of a saying that the devil looks after his own.

"You should never take care of anything. It's the surest way to lose it—your train, or your reputation, or your complexion. You should take no thought at all for the morrow, and it will take care of you."

"That's what we've been doing all our lives," I remarked; "until you insured the flat against fire, and then the geyser went wrong. And that's the only bit of bad luck we ever had since we married."

My wife, Nellie—professionally known as Helen O'Rourke—and I married on our salaries—such poor little salaries then!—exactly four and a half years ago. By all the laws of probability we ought to have starved, or run hopelessly into debt, instead of which, we got on—Nell in particular. But then, her voice is really wonderful.

We have the coziest flat in London,

and I have a three years' contract with that management which nearest approaches being ideal. And we have this quaint little cottage in Essex, whither we repair for Sundays and holidays, and where we are idling away Christmas now. Nell, who has been resting since October, will not, I should think, be able to work again, till April or May. The loss of her salary makes an awful vacuum in the exchequer, and if her voice suffers—and such things do happen—we shall have to alter our mode of living. Women have wonderful courage. I don't believe that a single disquieting thought ever enters her pretty head. And with that dreadful ordeal to look forward to through all these months!

What worries me this afternoon is this: that I have forgotten to renew my life insurance policy. It was horribly, idiotically careless of me, and this carelessness on my part is wicked—is almost criminal. Because, last June, when we had only our two selves to consider, and the responsibilities of life touched us very lightly, I raised a good big loan for Nell's father, standing as personal security for him. It was a case of sheer necessity, and it had to be done to save him from exposure and disgrace.

I do wish to goodness that tomorrow wasn't a holiday!

"Darlingest," says Nellie, "there's Mrs. Donnelly creeping round to the back door. Do go and let her in. I expect she wants a Christmas box. You know who she is—her husband does up the garden for us, when he isn't having fits. And they have all those tiny children, who are nearly all of them imbecile."

"Only a weak-minded philanthropist like you would encourage such people," I remark to her, after Mrs. Donnelly has departed, showering blessings upon us.

"If I had my way," says Nell, who occasionally astounds me with the vehemence of her opinions on certain much debated and delicate problems, "I would send the entire family to the lethal chamber. But, as a weak-minded spirit of humanity decrees that human life is sacred, and that useless and worse than useless people must live and cumber the ground, I suppose we must try and make them as little wretched as possible. Do you think it is too early for tea?"

I make tea for us both. I should really make a first-class housemaid, though I'm not so tall as ladies like them nowadays. And then I light a pipe, and roll cigarettes for Nellie, and read the *Referee*. And, every five minutes, something that I read, or the way the clock strikes, or the almanac on the wall, or a remark of Nell's, sets me worrying about that life insurance policy.

I won't brood like this! I shall go for a walk.

"I am going for a walk, Nell," I announce.

"I am not," she rejoins promptly.

Nell has such an honest, whole-hearted hatred of exercise in any form! So she curls herself up on the sofa, like a little rat, and I put a rug over her feet, and a cushion under her dear little head, and start out by myself.

A thaw seems to have set in since the morning, and I am sorry, for I was hoping that the ice would bear tomorrow. There is a river just across the fields, which ought to be good for skating. It is covered with thickish ice for some way down, but, just up by the mill, where the strong current comes, there is only a thin coating, and icicles cluster thickly on the old mill-wheel. Some members of the Donnelly family are playing aimlessly in the fields.

One of them, a boy of nine, creeps down the bank, and begins sliding. I call to him to come off at once, for it

is rapidly growing dark, and he will not be able to see where the thin ice joins the thick. It is too late, for he has embarked upon another run, and he cannot stop the impetus of his slide!

He falls! There is a crack—a splash—a shriek——

I dash down the bank, and, tearing off my coat as I plunge knee-deep into the icy water, I throw it out to him and call to him to catch hold of it. But he—helpless imbecile!—he doesn't comprehend. He sinks—once!

I watch for his rising. Then—ah, as I feared!—the force of the current has dragged him nearer the mill-weir, just where the stream is strongest. I grasp the bushes, and lean out as far as I can, but he is beyond my reach.

If I plunge in after him, the cold will probably benumb me, and I sha'n't be able to swim, and then it's certain death to both of us. And he's a hopeless imbecile, and his life is of no use to him. What can he do but starve and suffer? And, if he lives to grow up, he'll but perpetuate his own miseries, for that is the way of his kind. If I were alone in the world— But, being what I am, ought I to risk my life?

That neglected insurance policy!

I am not even a man with a business or profession, which would secure some provision for his widow. All an actor's fortune lies bound up in himself—insecure bonds, truly.

He has gone down under the water again. He can rise only once more!

My Nell would be a widow, my unborn child fatherless, Nell's father would be hopelessly disgraced. But I can't stand by, and see a child drown before my very eyes. I, a man!

He has come up again, and it is for the last time, now. I can't leave him to die alone. I can't stop and see him—is he conscious? It seems as though his eyes were open and fixed reproachfully on me—but it's growing dusk. I feel rooted to the bank.

I can't go home—I can't face my wife. I have stood by and let a helpless child drown! My God! I feel as though I were his murderer!